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LECTURES  
ON  
CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS.  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

DELIVERED IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL, JOHN-STREET.

LECTURERS.

REV. W. ANDERSON.

DR. WARDLAW.	REV. J. C. EWING.
DR. HEUGH.	MR. JAMES BEITH
REV. D. KING.	REV. A. HARVEY.

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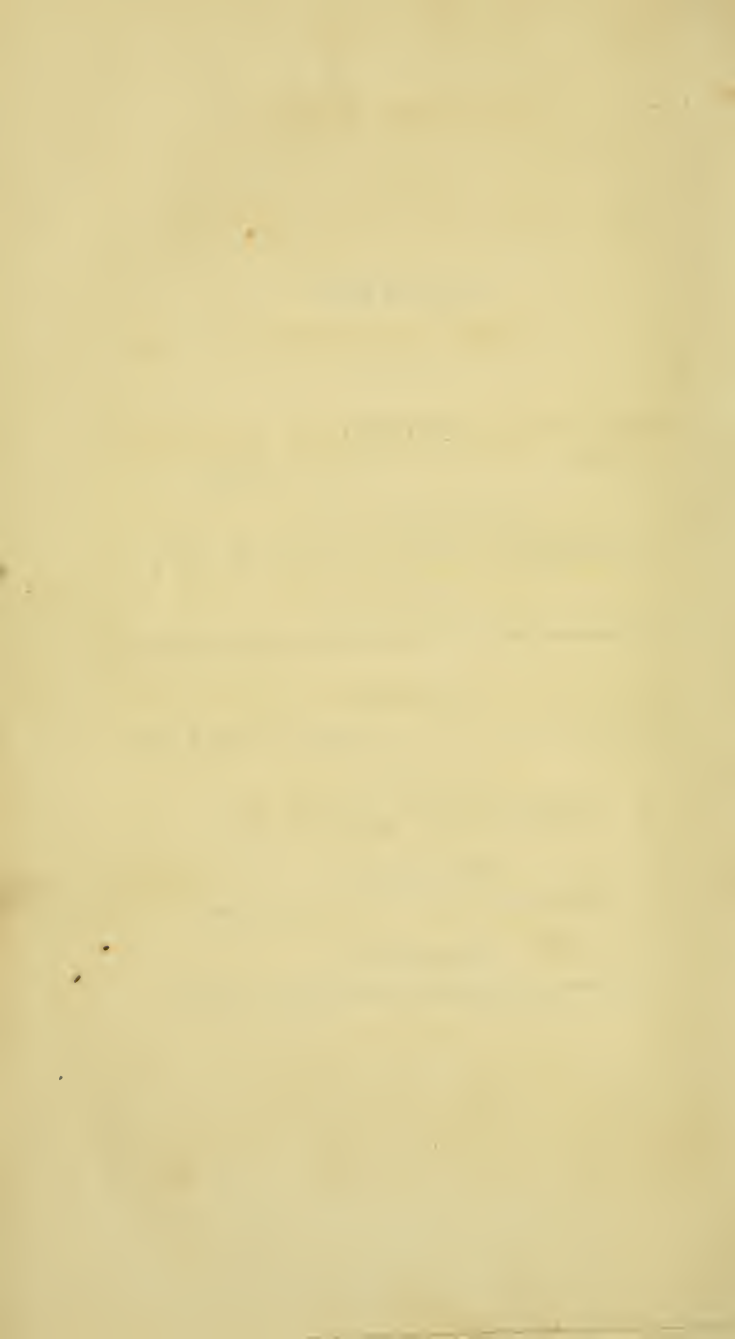
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LECTURE FIRST:  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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THE OPENING OF THE CASE.

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DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 27th, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,  
JOHN-STREET.

By WILLIAM ANDERSON,  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

THIRD EDITION, ENLARGED.

MDCCCXXXV.

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ALTHOUGH the Series of Lectures, of which that published in the following pages was the First, be patronized by the VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY of GLASGOW, yet their sanction is given in a manner so general, that each Lecturer is to be understood as being almost entirely alone responsible for the particular sentiments he may utter, or the expressions he may employ. Besides, the present Lecture is published from the press without any concurrence, in any shape, on the part of the Committee.

It may be proper farther to explain, that, although the following pages, the length of No. 18, are printed verbatim from the manuscript from which the Lecture was publicly read, yet, afterwards, there is a little difference between what is printed and what was spoken, in consequence of the Lecturer having, towards the conclusion, addressed his audience, even without premeditation.



## LECTURE.

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FRIENDS AND HEARERS,

THE part of the work assigned me, in the projected course of Lectures, is to do little more than make a statement of our objects and views, and offer such explanations as seem necessary for setting our cause fairly before the public. This being done, the way will be open, for those who succeed me, to engage in the argumentative discussion.

In the First place, then, as to our *object*—it is to gain such a separation of Church and State, that our civil legislators and governors shall cease, when acting in their official capacity, from patronizing either one or other party of professing Christians;—that they shall desist from making declarations, in the name of the subjects, either of what is, or what ought to be, or what ought not to be, the National religion;—that they shall abrogate all existing laws which make a distinction among the subjects on the ground of religious opinions;—and, consequently, that they shall also abrogate all laws which have for their object the perpetuation of the endowment of what are called the National Churches, with the nation's property and treasure; and that they shall apply the funds thus disengaged from partial services, to secular objects of universal national benefit. In a word—that they shall confine their legislation and government to those objects to which we are convinced the ordination of God limits them, *viz.* the protection, regulation, and cherishing, of our temporal interests; and cease from presuming (for less than presumption we cannot account it when they attempt,) to help forward, by their compulsory legislation, the spiritual ark of the Christian covenant. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, we say of them; let them keep



to their vocation; let them be impartial, prudent, and active men, at their politics; the Church of the Redeemer is something much too delicate and refined for being meddled with, either by their Parliamentary or Royal hands.

Such is our object, the divorce of Church and State; and now, in the Second place, with regard to the *means* by which we endeavour to have our object gained—they are means of peace. Our opponents employ the baton and sword; the bailiff and the trooper; the fine, imprisonment, and massacre in the maintenance of their usurpation; we propose to bring it down by the power of truth; by arguments addressed to men's judgments, or if ever by appeals to their passions, only to their best passions; and, even then, only after we have endeavoured to enlighten their understandings. We threaten no forcible overthrow of their system; we excite to no violence; we are only engaged in the enterprise of such a rational influencing of the minds of our legislators, and the people at large, that the abolition will be effected willingly and voluntarily. As Christians, we, in the name of the Church, sue for her divorce from the State in the court of Scriptural argument; and, as Patriots and freemen, we, in the name of the State, sue for his divorce from the Church in the court of Political argument: having an abhorrence of courts-martial in all their forms.

In the Third place; The chief *reasons* which originally induced us to enter on this work, and which continue to keep alive our zeal in its prosecution, are contained in the following summary, drawn up by the hand of a master, and adopted as a statement of the principles of our Glasgow Voluntary Church Society:—

I. “That the interference of the secular power has not been appointed by Jesus Christ for the support and propagation of Christianity.

II. “That, on the contrary, he has expressly appointed other means for the accomplishment of these ends, *viz.* the voluntary exertions, individual and combined, of the professed friends of his religion, by which means alone, under the influence of the Spirit of God, Christianity was successfully propagated in the first ages.

III. “That a departure from this simple divine appointment, by the substitution of legal force in its place, is in itself dishonouring to the wisdom and authority of Christ, and tends to produce, and has, in fact, produced, evils of

great magnitude, among which the following may be enumerated: 1st, Civil governments arrogating to themselves the right of judging for their subjects in matters of religion; 2d, Corruptions of Christian doctrine and worship receiving the sanction of public law, perpetuated under that sanction, and supported by a sinful appropriation of the national resources; 3d, Opposite forms of belief and worship countenanced and upheld by the same legislature; 4th, The rights of conscience violated, by compelling the contributions of those who dissent on principle from the established sects; 5th, A lure held out to persons having the most opposite views in religion, and not less opposite in their religious and moral deportment, to unite hypocritically or inconsistently in the profession of the established faith; 6th, The subordinating of religion to purposes of worldly policy; 7th, The preventing of the progress of true religion, and the promoting of infidelity and immorality, by this most unfavourable position of the religion and Church of Christ; 8th, The infliction of perpetual injustice on those who separate from the established communion; 9th, The alienation of Christians from one another by arrogant assumptions and encroachments on the one side, and by unavoidable dissatisfaction on the other; and, 10th, The weakening of civil government itself, by the infusion of mischievous ecclesiastical influence, by disuniting the subjects of the same empire, and by the favouritism and injustice of its administration.

IV. "That the good which has been effected in Established Churches by the ordinances of Christ, would have been attained to an indefinitely larger amount, and with incomparably less of debasing alloy, had Christianity been left, as at first, to make its way by its own divine energies and resources.

V. "That these evils can never be removed except by a return to the original appointment of Jesus Christ, and thus leaving Christianity to the voluntary support of its friends, and the favour of its divine Author."

Now, my hearers, you will all allow, I presume, that, in legal phrase, this libel is relevant, *i. e.* that the annexed penalty will fall to be righteously inflicted in the judgment of all honest men, if the allegations are proved to be true. The leading of the proof is, as I have already explained, committed to the care of those who shall succeed me, while the duty devolved on me is only the opening of the case.

Having stated, then, what is the object at which we aim, what are the means which we employ for securing it, and what are the reasons which make us zealous in prosecuting it, I proceed to make a few observations on the general features of the question.

I. I observe, in the First place, that the question is one of fair and lawful discussion. This may at first sight appear a trifling observation: but its importance will appear on considering, that the treatment which we receive from many is such, that it can proceed only from one or other, or both of two assumptions—either, that the authority for the compulsory support of the church by the state is so intuitively obvious, that none but the most ignorant or wicked characters can call it in question; or, that since the Established Church is their own church, we have no right to intermeddle with its affairs, but should, if we would avoid the charge of presumption, confine our attention to our own conventicles and meeting-houses.

The first of these imaginations, that the propriety of the compulsory system is intuitively obvious, entertained by the more ignorant portion of our adversaries—some of them lords and some of them ladies—we may leave to be banished out of their minds by their better instructed brethren who have taken an argumentative part in this controversy. These will assure them, if they will honestly relate their experience, that they have found the point to be not just so clear. That instead of its being intuitively obvious, that William IV. as king, and the Dukes of Cumberland and Wellington as lords, and Mr. Peel and Mr. Goulbourn as commoners, have a commission from Christ to levy money on infidels by a compulsory tax for the support of Christian ministers, and the furnishing of Christian sacraments, (I feel myself to be guiltless of any improper judging of men's secret thoughts when I say, that if our more enlightened opponents would be candid with their weaker brethren, they would tell them, that instead of having felt all this to be intuitively obvious,) they have found it necessary to institute a most laborious course of argument to efface the first impression, even from their own minds, and how much more from the minds of their intelligent auditors, that the system is shockingly anti-christian: so much so, that notwithstanding all their laboured argumentation, even when they think they have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of every reasonable theologian, that Cain's

want of faith consisted in his not being sufficiently accurate in paying his tithes, still, still the monstrous idea of an infidel being taxed for the furnishing of Christian sacraments, will break in on their fancied security like a ghost which has been imperfectly exorcised ; so that they themselves are often sick of compulsion, and would fondly demonstrate, that it is all a stupid mistake, when any man supposes that the Church by law established costs the nation a single farthing ! At all events, they will readily admit that the question is one of legitimate discussion for Christian men, when investigating the constitution of the Christian Church.

The other imagination of our opponents under which some of them complain, is, that the Established Church being their own, we have no right to interfere with it, be it ever so defective and vicious in its principles.

We might reply, that every man who assumes the Christian name comes under obligations to submit himself, to some extent, to the inspection of every other Christian, in virtue of the catholicity or unity of the Church of the Redeemer. Accordingly, we admit the right of the members of the Established Church to discuss a certain length the conduct of our churches ; nor are they wanting in availing themselves of the privilege, wherever they think they can make it contribute to the advantage of their own cause. In this controversy, however, we have taken no advantage of our right founded on this principle. We claim the right of exposure and interference on grounds, the sufficiency of which, even the worldly part of their members may easily comprehend, and on which they can plead no right of interfering with our affairs. So far as these churches are Established Churches, we maintain that they are as much *ours* as they are theirs ; and instead of the presumption lying with us when we discuss their demerits, that it all lies with them who would call our right into question, as if these churches were theirs exclusively. Exclusively *theirs* ! Are they not every day called *national* churches ? patronized by the government common to us all, and endowed with wealth contributed by us all. And they must be unreasonable persons indeed, if they complain of us inquiring into the merits of institutions with which the time and attention of *our* King and Parliament are so extensively engaged ; but especially on which *our* treasure is so lavishly expended. There is more than this—much more. Some of our opponents discourse with much vehemence on



national responsibility. *We* also regard it as a solemn and interesting subject, and consider ourselves in some degree answerable to God for the conduct of our rulers, as being the nation's servants, and particularly, for their conduct towards the Church of Christ. And if we be convinced, as without the least misgiving of mind we are, that any official interference on their part with that Church is violatory of the divine law, (not to speak of any corruptions of doctrine and discipline in these churches for which, as being national institutions, we are accountable,) who of the least knowledge of the operation of Christian principle—who of the least portion of common sense, can feel any wonder, that, under these impressions, we feel highly excited in our zeal to have this national iniquity abolished? And if our impressions be wrong, what is the duty of our opponents? evidently, to endeavour to argue us out of our misconceptions; which just brings us round to the point, that the question is one of legitimate discussion. And should they say, that they have discussed the question with us already, and that since we have not submitted to their arguments there remains nothing for our obstinacy but to endeavour to exhibit us to public detestation as the enemies of the Church of Christ, they must submit to be told, that, amid all the strength of their invective, the virulence of their abuse, and the boldness of their assumptions, so powerless have we felt any thing they have offered in the way of argument, that the longer and louder they have spoken, and the more they have printed, the stronger has grown our conviction of the integrity of our cause. Yea, verily, our opinions were not taken up so inconsiderately that we can be brought to surrender them at the point of such logic as constructs arguments for the exactions of an establishment, either on the scantiness of Cain's tithes, or the abundance of Abraham's, or the persecuting spirit of the Solemn League and Covenant. We must have something new. We plead guilty to being troubled with a most Athenian disposition in this matter. They may be assured that, so far as even the appearance of argument is concerned, which is calculated to move us, they have the controversy yet to begin.

II. I observe in the Second place, that being so strongly convinced as we are of the lawfulness and importance of our object, no reasonable man can object to the means which we employ for securing it. These means I have already stated are the enlightening and persuading of the minds of the

people and our legislators, that the abolition of the evil of which we complain may be effected by a formal and deliberate decree of the government of the nation. Can any thing be fairer than this? Did we use violence,—did we resort to the same weapons for bringing down the compulsory system with which our opponents uphold it,—did we meet force with force,—did we call upon the payers of tithes, and tiends, and the annuity-tax, to resist the exaction,—or did we use such mob-exciting language as that which is so favourite with both reverend and lay orators on the other side of the question, that they will stand by the Church of Scotland, meaning thereby its national endowment, even to blood and death, yea, to blood and death!—what could martyrdom do more?—Did we pursue such a course as this, we might perhaps be justly blamed. But, when the weapons of our warfare are arguments, who at this hour of the day of the shining of liberty shall presume to challenge our procedure? And should they say that our arguments are so false and sophistical that they should not be employed, we reply, that it is not *they*, but the *public*, who are the proper judges whether this be the case or not. Before that public we summon them to meet us. And if they shrink from the trial, and claim a packed jury of the aristocracy and wealthy of the land, under the allegation that the people are so ignorant as not to be qualified for the judgment; then we ask them, Where, on their own showing, are the vaunted benefits of the establishment, since it has left the people in such a state of ignorance as to be incapable of deciding aright, after hearing both sides of the question, on a point so very simple,—whether there be either New Testament principle or political justice in taxing an infidel for the furnishing of Christian sacraments? But let our opponents libel the people as they may, *we* think differently of them; we believe that by the efforts both of the Establishment and Dissent, and under the march of intellect, the popular mind has been so whetted, as to be sufficiently qualified to pronounce a right sentence. Besides, our civil legislators have, by the enlargement of the elective franchise, declared that a considerable proportion, at least, of the population, are fit for judging on national questions, of which church-establishments form one. And if any party are to be regarded as disqualified in the present case, that party, we maintain, is the aristocracy, who, when they are in general no better qualified than even a *five* pound

constituency would be in general, morally at least,\* if not intellectually, are, in consequence of self-interest, and violent political prejudices, placed in a much more unfavourable position for giving judgment according to righteousness. But we plead for the exclusion of no party. The question is a national one, and we sue for a national decision.

Mark them *there*, say the opposite party: in appealing to the nation, they also appeal to the *infidel* part of it. Well, suppose we did frame a particular part of our appeal especially for that class—has an infidel, I ask, no rights? Our opponents know better. They are aware it would be as dangerous for them to rob an infidel as a Christian. The unbeliever, it is true, has no claim for a blessing on the justice of the divine government, but neither has the believer. The question in the present case is not about what either one or other party has a right to at the hand of God; but what, as fellow-citizens, one man has a right to at the hand of another. It stands declared, indeed, both in the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, that the unbeliever is destitute of all civil rights: but, were the rule of these instruments applied—were the Church of Scotland faithful to her own unrepealed standards, and could she prevail on the magistracy to enforce them—it would go hard with not a few of the most violent advocates of church-establishments. Not to speak of certain Episcopalians who have signalized themselves in the advocacy, there are furious infidel churchmen whom the National Covenant, sworn to and executed in the spirit of its framers, would give a quick compulsory conveyance over the border, where the Solemn League would lay hold on them, to give them a further conveyance over seas, if not some punishment still more painful and ignominious. But these Covenants have well-nigh played out their part, in the history both of the world and the Church. They now exist

\* “The corruption that is spreading through *both* the extremes of society in England, the *higher* and the lower, is also a very dark and threatening sign.”—*Douglas of Cavers*.

“After all, what is the higher society of England? According to my own experience, and I have lived there in the very highest, and what is called the best, no way of life can be more corrupt. In England, the only homage which they pay to virtue is hypocrisy. I speak, of course, of the tone of high life. The middle classes may be very virtuous.”—*Lord Byron*.



principally as objects of antiquarian curiosity : and with the exception of a very small fraction, a considerable part even of which fraction would fondly reduce itself by the rule of self-annihilation into the liberality of the church endowed, Churchmen as well as Dissenters are agreed, that infidels *are* possessed of civil rights, in virtue of which they may lawfully interfere in every thing which is discussed and decreed upon by a British Parliament. And that Church-establishments are of this nature, let witness be borne by the petitions for more and more money, with which our opponents unceasingly knock at the door of the national exchequer. Yes, let the members of the Church of Scotland be told, that not only we dissenters, but those infidels against whom they are bound as members of the Church of Christ to raise the voice of denunciation, have both right and reason in replying,—Gentlemen, you had as well moderate your tone ; remember that the Church of Scotland is *our* church, as well as yours, in so far as it is a national institution ; and if it is employed for our abuse, you need not wonder, that, as a free-born part of the community, we should lend all our energies to have the institution abolished, with all its endowments—as they say at Newcastle, we may do with our own what we please.

Although I thus maintain, however, that, as citizens, and having a common concern with infidels in defending ourselves from spoliation, we would be justified in making appeals to them for aid, I defy our opponents to produce a single sentence from any speech made at any voluntary meeting, or from any book or pamphlet any of us has published, in which advantage is taken of this liberty. On the contrary, I refer it to infidels themselves, if we have not uniformly conducted our pleadings on principles which their hearts nauseate. We have, indeed, spoken frequently, and intend to speak a great deal more, of the taxing of these ungodly characters for the support of Christian ordinances ; but it was never in a spirit of sympathizing with infidelity, but in a spirit of grief and indignation, that such foul dishonour should be done the Church of the Redeemer, that her enemies could taunt her with being maintained at *their* expense.

Nevertheless, our opponents persist in objecting—Although you deny that you appeal to the passions of infidels, yet you must allow that infidels prosecute the same object

which you prosecute; their motives may be in some respects different from yours, but still they and you are found travelling in the same road;—'tis a most disgraceful and unholy alliance. It needs not be told how frequently such representations have been made, and with what power our more cunning opponents have swayed them over the minds of their weaker brethren and sisters, till they have contrived to render us, both in character and person, objects not only of detestation, but absolutely of horror. You can easily conceive, my hearers, that in such circumstances it is difficult to refrain from expressing ourselves in the language of the strongest indignation. I am persuaded, however, that to do so would serve no good purpose when speaking before intelligent men. I shall therefore endeavour to give the case a very temperate treatment.

When a Christian knows of an unbeliever being of the same mind with him in regard of any worldly object, which the question of Church establishments, so far as it is a political question, undoubtedly is, he has express apostolical authority, as I shall presently show, for calling on that unbeliever to unite exertions with his. Although this would have been perfectly lawful, however, our Voluntary Societies have not judged it expedient. They have not framed themselves on such principles that infidels can consistently become members. And where there may be such unhappy characters who strive for the separation of Church and State, and appear to fight by our side, or back us in the contest, they are there uninvited, and "fight for their own hand."

Well, suppose I were engaged in an attempt to save a man from being drowned, would it be requisite for me to cease from the attempt because an infidel came up and entered heartily into the attempt also? Must I cease to be merciful because an infidel is humane?—I am on board a leaky vessel, and so are you my hearers, her name is the *Britannia* and *Erin*, and when I am working at the pump, must I retire from it and leave the ship to sink, so far as my efforts are concerned, because of the unholy alliance, when some infidel on board may commence to pump also?—Had I bought a share of the Gas Company, but detected that there are some infidels among the shareholders, must I therefore part with my good bargain?—Because there may be infidels among the subscribers, must I abstain from countenancing the Infirmary or House of Refuge?—Because

there may have been infidels among the agitators for the abolition of negro slavery, would I have been blameless had I not agitated also? Behold the ethics of churchmen, how scrupulous they be about purity of communion! I might ask a hundred such questions as the above, but, for illustration's sake, I shall make only another supposition. Suppose that the Russian Despot should make a descent from the North with a hundred thousand of his serfs, for the enthralling of our native land. Those who are so ready to act the part of martyrs for the Church, would not hesitate, I trust, to act the part of patriots for the State. Well, they have risen and buckled on their armour, and marched to the field of battle: but, oh horror! they detect a regiment of infidels in the host of their country. No, they cannot fight, they dare not fight, in such company; it would be clean against their principles of communion: so they must just return home, and leave patriotism to the infidels and voluntaries, whose principles are so lax that they can tolerate the unholy alliance.—I allow, my hearers, that this representation is made in a spirit of sarcasm, but I at the same time maintain, that it is the sarcasm of sound argument, in repelling base and malicious calumny. I defy any man to show the illustration is not applicable, and that there would be no parallel between the supposed case of our opponents deserting their country's banner, and our case, were we to abstain from prosecuting the abolition of the connection betwixt church and state, merely because there may be men of insufficient principles who prosecute the same object.

We are not satisfied, however, with acting in this matter merely on the defensive. Let our opponents be condemned on their own ground. Never could the sentence be more appropriately applied than to them, in reference to this charge of infidel association—"Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Are there no infidels, we ask, leagued with *them* in support of the endowments of the church? If we are backed by all the Radicals, as they call them, are they not backed by all the Tories? And are the Tories universally saints, any more than the Radicals? I concede, with joy, indeed, and thanksgiving to divine grace, that there are some Tories who appear to stand in the first rank of the spiritual church of Christ; but I claim a like concession for not a few Radicals. Here, then, the matter is

balanced for once : and I balance it a second time, when I venture all my character for candour on the declaration, that the proportion of infidel, unprincipled, and profligate characters, is as great among the Tories as the Radicals. I would not feel I was in much danger of forfeiting my pledge, although I were to say that the proportion among the first party is considerably greater. Object to us, and taunt us with *our* infidel alliance! The assurance of our opponents is unmeasurable. It were easy to collect abundance of evidence similar to that afforded by a late public meeting, when the chairman magnified the Church of Scotland amid heathenish swearing by Jupiter, and other gods not so respectable.

Remark, therefore, that although the account be balanced on two points, there is a decided preponderance on a third against churchmen's alliances. Of an infidel Radical who openly avows his opposition to the national endowment, because he regards the whole of the Christian faith a delusion, and of an infidel Tory who for selfish or political purposes declares that his conscience most powerfully constrains him to support the Church of Scotland against all its adversaries, when he reflects and meditates upon its spiritual worth and services—of these two characters, I ask, what man of integrity can for a moment hesitate which he should most deeply condemn, and which he should be most ashamed of as an associate? Both of them are abhorred of God; but to the latter he says, with peculiar indignation,—“What hast *thou* to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee?”

I am sure I have said quite enough on this subject for the silencing of the objection about infidel associates. But I must give it another paragraph, in consequence of having stated, a short time ago, that I would lay before you apostolical authority for uniting even in regular association with avowed unbelievers, for securing an abolition of national establishments, so far as it is a patriotic object, did we judge such an association expedient or necessary. Before I read the passage, which is contained in the 5th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, I make this explanation—that the apostle lays down in it a plain distinction betwixt holding intercourse with a man as a fellow-citizen, in conducting the affairs of this world, and fellowship with him as an



acknowledged Christian brother, in the ordinances of the church.

“I have written to you,” he says, “in this Epistle, not to associate with fornicators. Yet not universally with the fornicators of *this world*, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, *for then must ye needs go out of the world*. But now I write to you not to associate with *him* if any one called a *brother* be a fornicator, or covetous, &c. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without the church? Do not ye judge them who are within it, (so as to have sufficient work on your hands.)”

A writer in the Voluntary Church Magazine has remarked, that “the church party reverse this apostolic rule of discipline. They omit to judge those who are within the pale of their church, and busy themselves with judging those who are without it.” The remark may be improved. They trouble themselves little with judging either those who are within their church, or those who, outside of it, are rallied round it for its defence. But they make full compensation for this carelessness, by judging those who are within *our* churches, and also those who are without them. Just let any radical, when passing by, say of us,—Now, these are honest men; they engage in their worship entirely at their own expense,—Churchmen presently call a court-martial, adjudge him an infidel worthy of execution, and then taunt us with his ignominious association. I appeal to you, who are acquainted with the tactics of our opponents, if there be the least touch of caricature in this representation.

You will observe, my hearers, in what connection the above discussion was introduced; it was in the course of explaining and vindicating the lawfulness of the means which we employ for securing our object. There are a few more similar explanations which I would have made, had our time permitted, but I find it necessary to press forward to another topic.

III. Observe, therefore, in the Third place, what are the views which we entertain of the Established Church, and how our proceedings are calculated to affect its interests.

Under this head of explanation, I remark, First, that we do not for a moment hesitate to acknowledge that that church has been, and continues to be, the means of effecting much good; and to express our belief and trust, that many sons and daughters have been born, and are being born, and edu-

cated for God, under her maternal ministration.—Friends and hearers! although to serve a purpose against their moderate brethren, similar acknowledgments were once occasionally made by the evangelical party of the profitableness of our churches in the service of Christ, do you ever hear any such acknowledgments made now? No, no; the tottering cause of compulsion cannot afford to bestow on us one candid word. To allow that there is the least particle of good to be found among us, would create suspicion against the man who made the allowance, that he was a traitor in the camp. *Our* cause being the cause of truth and justice, makes no demand on us for acting a part so disingenuous and cowardly. We frankly and joyfully admit that the institution of our opponents has effected, not only a measure, but a large measure of spiritual good, for the Redeemer's kingdom. But when their orators plead this as a reason for the continuance of its endowments and patronage by the state, we treat the argument with contempt. Why, these men speak as if they believed that the smile and gold of the king had done it all, and that without these nothing of it would have been done. Here is our principle, "that the good which has been effected in established churches, *by the ordinances of Christ*, would have been attained to an indefinitely larger amount, and with incomparably less of debasing alloy, had Christianity been left as at first, to make its way by its own divine energies and resources." On the evidence and proof of this it is not my duty to enter. The task is assigned to one who will execute it with much greater ability. Only, I cannot refrain from remarking, that Knox and his coadjutors broke and dissipated the power of Popery, and protestantised this country, nearly to as great an extent as it is protestantised at present, when yet the Church of Scotland was a Voluntary one, and before it was connected with the state. And again, it had fallen back, or rather, I should say, had advanced forward, to the Voluntary position, when it resisted the incursion of royal Episcopacy. We admit that there has been no period of its history in which the Church of Scotland has not effected good; but equally do we maintain, that the days of its brightest glory, and those to which we stand most indebted for benefits, were the days of its Voluntaryism. And if ye refuse my testimony on the subject, hearken to that of Dr. Chalmers, emitted at a time when his authority was more to be relied on than it is now,

as being then comparatively little a man of party. In the discourse preached on the occasion of laying the foundation of Knox's monument, he spoke to this effect: That so long as Knox contented himself with the spiritual weapon, the Reformation proceeded triumphantly; but that so soon as the church having wrenched the carnal weapon from the hand of her adversary, began to wield it herself, then the Reformation was stayed, and began to languish. I am trespassing, however, on the ground of a succeeding Lecturer, and must withdraw from it, howsoever reluctantly,—

To remark Secondly, that entertaining the views expressed above of the Church of Scotland, our measures cannot be misapprehended by any discerning man as having for their object the abolition of that church as a constituent and separate section of the Church of Christ. And yet, there are many who feel towards us, and speak of us, as if it were our determination, that the king and parliament should so interfere as to break up their presbyteries, synods, and assembly, scatter their congregations, and command their ministers silence, under heavy penalties of law; or if these ministers should ever preach the gospel more, or their congregations ever listen to it more, it should only be as mercifully taken under the wings of the United Secession, or Relief Synod, or Congregational Union. Is it any wonder, my hearers, that when they labour under the misconception of believing that we entertain such designs, they should be exceedingly wrathful? We assure them, for the quieting of their fears, that our ambition has no such lofty aim; and that, although our measures should soon prove successful, they would not necessarily abridge their number, even by one congregation; and instead of scattering their Assembly, would enable it to meet, and deliberate, without "order taken" over it by any other than its One Spiritual and Heavenly King. In a word, we attempt no change on the Church of Scotland, so far as it is a Church of Christ, unless it be such a change as we desire for our own churches—an improvement in godliness. Our hostile blow is aimed entirely at the Pension. Let that be surrendered, then we of different denominations, United Secession men, Relievers, Independents, and Baptists, shall no more quarrel with the members of the Church of Scotland than we quarrel with one another. I can almost promise that we shall not call upon them to change their name, a little presuming although it be. The Old Church of Scotland,



or even the Mother Church of Scotland, let them call themselves, if their humour so incline. We promise we shall bear with a good deal of humoursome conduct if they shall just surrender the pension.

Surrender the pension! say they, you may just as well call upon us to give up the whole matter at once; it is the very life-blood, the very marrow of our system: without it we could not maintain our standing for a day.—There are two ways in which a man may make a false report concerning himself. In a spirit of self-conceit he may laud himself above his merits; or, in a spirit of modesty, he may underrate his worth. It is with the latter, and less common kind of erroneous self-judgment that our opponents are chargeable, when they say, they would be unable to keep their ground if they were made dependent, like the Dissenters, on their acceptableness with the people to whom they minister in things spiritual. O Sirs, this diffidence of yours, howsoever amiable in one respect, is not only most unjust to yourselves, but discredits your flocks in a manner which they do not deserve. We know and acknowledge you to be men of worth; and although your congregations may not tell you to your faces in what estimation they hold you, through fear of being charged with flattery, yet we assure you, that, out of your presence, they speak of you with the warmest affection, and wait with impatience for an opportunity of testifying it, when the government shall have delivered you over to their filial care. Cheer up, then, gentlemen; were the pension withdrawn, matters would be in a much better condition with you than your excessive modesty permits you to believe; and when our measures have effected their object, you will perceive that we have all along been labouring so as to promote your interests as well as our own. And should you persist in believing that your services are not so acceptable as those of the Dissenters, so as to be afraid to take the chance of voluntary maintenance in company with them, why, then, I advise that you signify this to the government in your next petition for the perpetuation and extension of the endowment; it will be a pithier reason than any you have yet advanced. The Dissenters, say you, can maintain themselves without any such endowment, but for us to subsist, were it withdrawn, would be absolutely impossible. (*Aside:* What if the government should say,—Let us be a praise to them that do best, and turn the stream of our favour on the

worthiest! Some say we are contending for a *share* of the pension, but we seem to ourselves to be in the fair way of securing the whole of it!)

IV. But you act in the spirit, and with the purpose of iniquitous *spoliators*, say our opponents. Be we able or unable to stand without the endowment, the Tiends were bequeathed to the Church by the *piety* of former ages, and are as much her rightful inheritance, as is the estate of any nobleman in the land.

A full discussion of this point is evidently precluded by the nature of this lecture, as already explained; equally, however, does it require that I give a brief explanation of our views. Passing over, then, the Annuity Taxes, the charges on Town's Funds, the Parliamentary Grants, and all such minor *items* of the endowment, let us fix our attention on the great standard impost, by which the Church of Scotland is maintained—the Tiends. What are they? I answer, they are part of that burden on lands with which the ancient kings of Scotland, by royal decree, or individuals, in transmitting their property by testament, endowed the Church of Rome. And how came they into the possession of the Church of Scotland? By inheritance, eh? as being the legitimate daughter of her of Babylon! No, say our opponents, with indignation. Our church is not of Roman lineage; on the contrary, she is the Papacy's deadliest foe. True, she was once the equally deadly foe of the Prelacy of England, and swore the Covenant of Extirpation against them both. The latter part of her oath, however, we forego, at the risk, though it be, of being charged with perjury by our excellent friends, Dr. McCrie, Dr. Symmington, and Mr. Willis, when we make common cause with Prelacy, and hail her as the well-beloved sister of our Presbyterian Zion; but as for Popery, we continue to abhor her with a perfect abhorrence. How, then, the question presses, did the Church of Scotland come to be possessed of her enemy's wealth? Evidently thus:—the Church of Rome having been declared by the government a nuisance, and abolished as a national institution, its endowment, so far as it had been made by the government, remained with the government; and so far as it had been bequeathed by private liberality, properly fell to be confiscated, as when the forfeited goods of a criminal are transferred to the government for public uses. In the first instance, indeed, a rapacious nobility unlawfully made spoil of

nearly the whole of these forfeited Popish goods, but this does not affect the case in the eye of law. Rightfully they were the government's, to be dealt with as it might see fit. Accordingly, at a future period it prevailed to cause the nobility to refund a part of what they had seized, sanctioning their appropriation of the rest, and with that part endowed the Presbyterian Church, not evidently as a *corporation* is endowed, but as a *national institution* is endowed. Let the Church of Scotland then be declared to be no longer a national institution, (which the government has unquestionably a right to do, if persuaded that to acknowledge it as such is unchristian and impolitic) then the funds formerly expended on the defunct institution, (defunct as a national one) remain in the power of the government, to be expended on some other institution, or such objects as it may judge proper. So far as it is an Established Church, the Church of Scotland stands in the same category with the Army and Navy. Suppose, then, the government were to propose the disbanding and dismantling of these two institutions, what should we think of the conduct of the soldiers and sailors, did they interfere and declare that not only were they life-rented in the barracks, the ships, the ordnance, the ammunition, and Parliamentary estimates; but that the country was bound to maintain a similar army and navy in all time coming? Not one whit less unreasonable and absurd than this would be in the soldiers and sailors, is the clamour of Churchmen about our meditated spoliation, when they claim the Tiends as the permanent and unalienable endowment of the Presbyterian Kirk.

Let us therefore now hear *their* explanation of the matter. When that part of the endowment which originated in the decree of the ancient kings of Scotland, is contemplated, it is to be regarded, say they, so far as it was an endowment of *religion*, fixed and unalterable—it would be sacrilege to touch with it; but alterable in its application from Popery, to our particular form of Presbyterianism, which has been infallibly determined to be the only genuine religion, so that all change in future would be sacrilegious robbery. And when that other part of the endowment is contemplated, which originated in the liberality of private individuals, who bequeathed it for the saying of certain *masses*, &c., we must consider it fixed and unalienable, so far as it was an endowment of religion, but subject to be changed in its application

by the government, from the Popery of the pious bequeathers, to the only genuine faith, the Presbyterianism of the Kirk, where it must remain for evermore ; and let all those who would endeavour to effect another change, be *anathema*, as infidel spoliators. Just as our old pious Town Council, in concert with our honest Kirk-session, felt it not only lawful, but imperative, to turn the legacy of the Prelatic Dr. Bell to a purpose of Presbyterian education : and just as it would be imperative on a Christian government, did it fall in with a well-endowed Mahometan Mosque, to turn the endowment to the support of the Kirk ; and to avoid, as they would not be chargeable with sacrilege, converting it to any other purpose, seeing it would be violatory of the testamentary deed of the *pious* Turkish bequeather, which is to be interpreted according to what his views *would be*, were he restored to the land of the living, which, there can be no question, would be in favour of Kirk Presbyterianism. On this principle, our opponents cannot see how they are not entitled to the whole of the endowments and mortifications even of Episcopacy, both in England and Ireland ; they are sure the pious dead would make the bequeathment in their favour, were it yet to be effected ; at all events, they read their title clear in the Solemn League and Covenant. But for reasons of prudence, they have resolved they shall allow this claim to sleep, till they have settled the dispute with the Voluntaries. —It is difficult to say in which character our opponents are most to be admired ; whether as civilians, or theologians, or moralists, or men of cautious forbearance.

There are several other subjects to which, in opening the case, it would be in my way to advert ; particularly, the bearing which our views have on the personal character of magistrates, on national education, and the sanctification of the Sabbath. But to enter on the consideration of any of these points, in the exhausted state of our time, would evidently be highly improper. I must therefore leave them to be discussed by my successors, or, on some other occasion, by myself.

I conclude with a vindication of our proceedings from the charge of *precipitancy* made against them by many friends and entertainers of our principles. Their complaint is, that, whereas our principles were silently working their way with



great force, our forming ourselves into public associations, was not only calculated to rouse our opponents to take similar active measures, but to force the full blaze of truth on the weak eyes of many ignorant persons, so as to make them hate the light, and commit themselves as its declared enemies, when, had we allowed it to open on them gradually, by means of sermons, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, conversation, &c., we might have gained them as friends. Now, there must be some force in this representation, because it has been made by some, who, in more dangerous times, when the Castlereagh Acts threatened them with a dungeon, proclaimed the iniquity of the alliance betwixt Church and State. We accordingly at once admit, that the representation is possessed of not a little truth; nevertheless, we maintain, that there were other reasons more powerful, which sanctioned our movement.

The Voluntary cause was not an infant one. We felt assured it would show its strength to be that of a host, so soon as its banner was publicly raised. Nor has the result disappointed us. We know of no other cause which was so ripe when it was first publicly organized. And, then, circumstances seemed to call upon us to embody and act with the power of union, even although we had been a less numerous party. The representations of want of accommodation within the pale of *their* Zion, and petitions to the government for its enlargement, were being made at that time by Churchmen, nearly as strongly and urgently as at the present moment; and the enactment of the Reform Law, was evidently to bring the cases both of the Irish and English Establishments under the review of Parliament, when our united voice might have some effect in modifying the measures which might be adopted. And who doubts that it shall? There is a Voluntaryism at present in the House of Commons, which, if not placed there by us, is enabled to speak with a boldness and an effect, to which, without us, it could not have attained. Instead of having acted precipitately, we feel that we were too tardy in adopting our measures for the enlightening and influencing of the public mind.

But whether our step was a false one or not, it is evident *we* cannot recede—we cannot fall back on the position of our brethren; and we appeal at once to their sense of generosity and self-interest, if it be not incumbent on them to advance and occupy *our* position, and show what the strength

of Dissenters is. *They* gain nothing by their silence, but are involved in all the odium which Churchmen cast upon the Dissenting cause; and *we* lose much in the want of their counsel, their advocacy, and the display of their number. Let them look at the other side; Do they see any neutrals there?—Brethren, let us be united. Even with disunion, our cause, -being the cause of truth, of justice, of the Redeemer, must prevail; but it will prevail sooner than it would otherwise do, if there be no division of our force—no Achilles troop resting on their arms, when their brethren are engaged in the conflict.

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## APPENDIX TO SECOND EDITION.

MY Publishers having intimated their intention to print a second edition of the preceding Lecture, I have craved liberty for an Appendix on these subjects to which I have adverted towards the conclusion; and without a statement of our views, in reference to which, the Lecture is greatly deficient. My request has been granted, on the conditions that I be brief and expeditious.

I. Many of our opponents allege that we are influenced by our system, to be careless about the moral and religious character of our legislators; yea, that the more irreligious a candidate for office may be, the more zealous are we in securing his election. How false is the representation! But is there any falsehood in the charge *we* bring against *them*, when we affirm, that although a man be a Sabbath-breaker, a profane swearer, and an adulterer, if yet he declare himself in favour of perpetuating the Church's endowment, and especially in favour of its extension, they forthwith proclaim him the religious candidate, around whom it is incumbent on all the faithful to rally, as they would not be guilty of violating the terms of a pure Christian communion?—Or is this a falsehood—that, although the King's cabinet were composed of as profligate characters as ever corrupted the earth, they would yet proclaim it a Protestant government, provided it exerted its power to uphold and increase the exactions of our three established Zions?—Or is this a misrepresentation—that on their principles, Great Britain and Ireland would

be a Christian Kingdom, though there were not a right hearted Christian in it, provided the government continued to enforce the levying of the tithes and tiends for Churchmen ; whereas America would be an atheistic land, although every soul in it were converted, if yet Congress refused to pronounce one of the sects the true Christian Church, and to commence a system of compulsory taxation for its aggrandizement ? How sanctified our opponents are in their views of a Christian magistracy, and of national religion ! *Official* Christianity is their loudest cry ; such a kind of saintship as is little concerned about its own faith and purity, but exceedingly concerned about the salvation of others, in having extended to them the blessings of that most efficient of Tory institutions—the Church, over which “the King hath authority to take order.”

We Voluntaries on the other hand, are concerned about the *personal* religion of our civil authorities ; for this obvious reason, that the advantageous management of our temporal interests requires *honest* men. The requisite honesty may indeed be found in an unbeliever, and is, in fact, sometimes found in such a one, when we search for it in vain in your *official* saint ; but still it is only in men who are personally religious, that we can repose full confidence. For such men we seek with strong desire, and for no reason more anxiously than the abolition of the alliance betwixt Church and State. Were our Throne, our House of Lords, and our House of Commons, all occupied by enlightened Christians, that unjust, corrupting, and anti-scriptural connection, would be dissolved without a debate. Why, therefore, our opponents will say, do ye refuse your suffrages to the pious men whom we have set forth as candidates ? Where are they ? We insist on the question. Where are the pious men whom they have set forth, and we have rejected ? In the most friendly spirit do we advise some Tory candidates for office, both in Parliament and Town Councils, that they use their influence with their indiscreet friends to make them cease from exhibiting them as saints, lest we be provoked, in self-defence, to discuss the difference betwixt *official* and *personal* saintship, with our illustrations drawn from their particular cases. And let them be assured, that not a few of them are indebted to the honourable and gentlemanly and forbearing spirit of Dissenterism, for such a course not having been heretofore adopted. *Sed est modus in rebus* : forbearance has its limits.—*Verbum sapienti sat.*



But although men were to present themselves as candidates whose personal piety was unquestionable, we might yet see fit to reject them, and give our suffrages to others whose religious character was inferior. Suppose the editor of the *Guardian*, or of the *Church of Scotland Magazine*, or—which will serve still better for illustration, as being on the whole the most devout Churchman of the brotherhood—suppose the editor of the *Courier* were sick and ready to die, and that there were two physicians, the one a zealous Churchman, but a man of little skill in his profession, and many of whose patients died of excessive blood-letting, he having studied at Rathcormac; the other a Voluntary, and consequently an infidel, but a man of great skill, and who preferred administering a glass of wine to the use of the lancet,—who can doubt that our sick Churchman would prefer the Voluntary for his attendant? So is it with *our* choice of medical men for the Body Politic. Were all other things equal, we would greatly prefer the religious physician; but we would not pass by infidel skill for unskilful piety. And so far as the divine blessing is concerned, since that blessing proceeds rather according to the sanctity of the employer than that of the instrument employed, when we at any time engage worldly men for the management of our temporal affairs, it remains for *us* to beseech the divine blessing on their counsels and operations.

Since we deem it lawful, as explained above, to advance irreligious men to office in our legislature and magistracy, when we cannot find religious men who are sufficiently qualified, it follows, that we cannot permit them to interfere with our *spiritual* affairs. And we demand of our opponents to explain, how it is that *they* give them such permission. For, practised though they be in that first point of law, denial, even of plain facts, I scarcely think they will have the hardihood to deny, in the face of the whole kingdom, that *they* also unite in advancing to civil office men who do every thing but give evidence that they are spiritually regenerated. Surely those, of whose church the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant form part of the standards,\*

\* On the occasion of the trial of Mr. Campbell, Dr. Fleming, who led the prosecution, declared in the General Assembly, without being contradicted, that these two Covenants remain unrepealed; and Mr. Willis has been admitted to plead their

will not hesitate to denounce Mr. O'Connell as an idolator. And yet, there are few to whom that gentleman and his *tail* are indebted for their admission among our legislators, so much, as they are to Dr. Chalmers, who pled so eloquently and zealously the cause of Catholic Emancipation. Where, then, we demand, is conscience, where is honour, where is consistency, when our Presbyterian opponents assign to a civil magistracy thus constituted, authority to interfere with a flock of Christ in the appointment of a pastor—to judge at what rate his spiritual services should be remunerated, and by the force of their law to provide the remuneration—and “to take order that the truth of God be kept pure and entire?”\* I hesitate not to proclaim it all a system of mean and abominable impiety. It is no better, but much worse, because there is tyranny in it, than were the sick churchman, in the case I have imagined, to receive the ordinance of the Supper at the hand of his infidel physician.

But, say our more devout opponents, Dr. Chalmers, and Dr. Thomson, and many other churchmen, conspiring with the apostates, Wellington and Peel, acted a most treacherous part against the Covenants; both Houses of Parliament should be cleared of papists, and nothing permitted to keep a place in our legislature, no not even on the throne, but what has on it the stamp of the true presbyterianism of the Kirk, as was resolved by “our fathers before us;” and where would be the incongruity *then* of such a blessed Parliament taking our Zion under its regulation? We might satisfy ourselves with replying,—First get the Parliament, and then we shall tell you. How contemptible it is, if not dishonest, that our opponents ever answer our exposure of existing enormities with suppositions and theories which they are well aware can never be realised!

But we do not decline following them into their fields of abstraction, being persuaded we can demonstrate that their imaginations are as undevout as their practice.

Suppose, then, that all the constituencies of England and Ireland, as well as of Scotland, had returned serious presbyterians to the House of Commons, and that the King and the Peers had been converted to the same faith; would not a

validity, among the advocates of the establishment, in the series of Lectures with which they are illuminating our city.

\* Westminster Confession, Chap. XXIII.

legislature so sanctified, say our opponents, feel themselves bound to exert their authority for Christ, as having received it from Him, and as being accountable for the employment of the talent with which he had entrusted them? Certainly, we answer. But, as faithful servants, would they not examine their Master's commission, with the view of ascertaining what he had appointed them to do, in their capacity of civil legislators, with the power he had conferred on them? Now, where, we ask, would they find in all that commission a warrant for their determining, in their magisterial capacity, *for the whole of the kingdom*, among which party the true church is to be found; and levying taxes for the support of the same at the point of the sword? Our opponents may be sure, that among all our national afflictions, we account it a very mysterious one, that a body of men should be pensioned on the country, as its only proper spiritual instructors, who make such work of the interpretation of the divine oracles, as to endeavour to prove, that a magistrate may, *jure divino*, send a troop of soldiers to levy money on an infidel, for the furnishing of bread and wine for Christians' Sacraments!\*

II. The bearing of our views on the Sanctification of the Sabbath. What a cry thousands of Sabbath-breakers have raised against the Voluntaries on this subject! Well, when we plead for *Voluntary* Sabbaths, for what kind plead ye? *Forced* ones, of course;—that if a man attend not the Church, he shall at least keep within his house, and sleep, or read novels, or play cards with his friends, and so honour the Lord's day at the Parliament's order by resting from labour! There is something peculiarly august in the Parliamentary religion of our antagonists.

\* The discussion of this subject has been carried as far as my limits permit; and I must refer to the Third Edition of my tract, "The Lame Restored," for an argument held with Dr. Mc'Crie and Mr. Willis on the question of a National Acknowledgment of God. I only remark at present, that all acknowledgment of Him made by a king, in the nation's name, must be a mockery, unless the nation be religious. Could King William, then, consistently with truth, confess in the name of the majority of this nation, that they worship God through his Son whom he has sent? When such a majority is gained, we shall then deliberate with them, who may be the proper organs through whom the confession is to be made.

The Sanctification of the first day of the week, as a day of *holy resting* from worldly employment, is a duty precisely of the same order with the observance of the ordinance of the Supper: and there would not be a whit less of profanity in the civil legislature taking upon itself to enforce Sacraments, than there is in its taking upon itself to enforce Sabbaths, on the plea that the Lord has given them a commission to compel others to reverence his day. Let them reverence it themselves and they do well.

Nevertheless, our opponents act a most disingenuous part, when they endeavour to prejudice our cause in the estimation of the operative classes, by representing us as opposed to all legislation by which they may be secured in a day of rest in the midst of their toils. None of us questions that the civil magistrate, in full consistency with the nature of his office, as the guardian of the health and worldly interests of the lieges, may ordain such a day of cessation from labour; especially on behalf of those who are in the condition of servants; in the same way as when he limits the hours of daily labour in a cotton factory. And, as a prudent and discreet judge, since many of the subjects will, from religious views, sanctify the first day of the week at all events, he will make *his* day of *civil* rest coincide with *their* day of *sacred* rest. But let him take care that he place his enactment on the proper footing,—that he is careful of men's temporal welfare. Should he begin to say, that he has discovered in the Scriptures, that God wills the sanctification of that day, and that he, as concerned for the divine glory and the interests of men's souls for eternity, is determined to enforce its sanctification by the power of the sword, the words of God to him will be, Who hath required this at your hand? It is not for our officers of police, affecting zeal for the divine glory, to assail with their batons those who on the Lord's day may be lounging or making merriment in the public green. No, verily; Christ has committed the vindication of the honour of his day to very different officers, armed with very different weapons.

III. The bearing of our views on National Education. It is difficult to say in which part of this controversy our opponents have acted with the greatest dishonesty. But if they have at any time excelled themselves in the practice of this quality, it appears to have been when treating of the question now before us. How earnest have they not been



in endeavouring to persuade the people, that a national endowment of churches, and a national endowment of schools are so inseparably connected in principle, that they must stand or fall together? It is a gross misrepresentation. None of us would question the lawfulness, and few of us the propriety, of the government instituting and endowing a system of national education much more extensive than any which at present exists. And when we maintain that such a system should be limited in its nature to instructions in branches of secular and *moral* education, as distinguished from those which are religious—what else, we ask, has our parochial education hitherto been? Has it been even so much? Has *moral* training been any part of its practice? Our antagonists must surely be conscious that they speak of fancies, and not of facts, when they represent the superiority of the Scottish character as having been in any, the least degree, the effect of the *religion* taught in our parish schools. Of late, some improvement has been made in a few cases; but so lately, and in cases so few, that I defy our opponents to produce fifty individuals in broad Scotland, of twenty years of age, who, being religious, will declare that they received religious impressions under our parochial teaching. Is the spelling and syllabbling of the Holy Scriptures, as a class-book, from the reading of which, when he has risen to the reading of “the Collection,” the child is taught to think he has made an advance in learning;—or is the tasking of him to the recitation of a Catechism, not one question of which he comprehends—is this a religious education even in the estimation of Churchmen? I have not the least hesitation in declaring my conviction, that the employment of the Scriptures, as a common class-book (the New Testament, be it observed, in striking consistency with compulsory theology, being of inferior importance to the Old,) has been of immense detriment to the religious interests of Scotland; not only as being of itself a desecration of the Divine oracles, but as creating habits of irreverence, and listless thoughtless uninquiring reading, in their perusal. Accordingly, the committee of the Presbytery of Glasgow on education, have made some strictures on the use of the Bible in Schools, which show they are somewhat sensible of this evil; and very curiously, for gentlemen who are so horrified at the mutilation of the Scriptures perpetrated in the Irish scheme of

education, have recommended that the Proverbs of Solomon be extracted and printed for the use of schools.\*

By your own confession, therefore, say our opponents, the system is under the process of improvement. Well, suppose exposition of the Scriptures, and enforcement of their truths on the consciences of youth were practised to a much greater extent—the practice of which, however, to any very profitable extent, I do not believe will ever be reached amid the hubbub of a reading school—What right, I ask, would the government have to tax a Baptist, or Arminian Methodist, or Socinian, or Infidel, for the support of a school taught by a Calvinistic expositor of the appointment of the Kirk? The more faithful he might be, the stronger would be the objections to the iniquity of the impost. Were Sir Daniel, in the course of his translations of the New Testament, to defend the rendering of the authorised version, Acts xii. 4, and lecture his pupils on the sanctification of Easter-day, would not Dr. Macgill be inflamed with anger? And is it lawful only for established Doctors to be angry when the national wealth is employed in support of teaching opinions in which they do not agree? Is the conscience of such a man as was Robert Hall of so insignificant account, when compared with that of such a man as Dr. Macgill, that the British Parliament may, under the eye of justice, trample with impunity on the rights of the Baptist's; but must be wary in giving offence even to the judgment of the Calvinist? More than the half of the notes of that hour have struck, with the expiry of which all such infamous partiality shall be abolished for ever. The twelve o'clock is ringing.†

\* In taking the part which I did take with some prominence in advocating Stanley's scheme of Government-education for Ireland, I felt not quite at ease; but my difficulty arose from its embracing a Scriptural education in any degree, and I overcame it by pleading with myself, that it promised a *reduction* of the evil. I may further state, that I have looked over the First Part of the Scripture Lessons recommended by the Commissioners; and were the note on the 16th page erased, I must say, that I would rejoice were they introduced into the voluntary school in which my own child is taught. Even *with* that note, I am prepared to show that the authorised version contains errors nearly as prejudicial.

† It is not likely that these lines will ever meet the eye of my old Professor: but lest they should, I respectfully request

Now, should our opponents exclaim, Behold the atheistical education of Voluntaries, according to which no acknowledgment should be made of God! I shall raise the counter exclamation, Behold the stupidity of Compulsories, who cannot understand how the State may give a child one part of its education, and the Church another! Is not this division of educational labour practised every day? Is not a boy taught Latin in the Grammar School, and music and painting elsewhere? Or, because music and painting are not taught in that seminary, must we say its regulators represent an education as being perfect without them? But more to my point—A young man may pass through the Latin class of Mr. Ramsay, the Greek class of Sir Daniel, the Logic class of Mr. Buchanan, the Moral Philosophy class of Mr. Mylne, the Natural Philosophy class of Mr. Meikleham, graduate, and come forth to the world an A.M. without having received, canonically at least, one solemn exhortation on the subject of Christian faith. Must we therefore say of the Glasgow College that it is atheistic in its scheme of education? Just with as much propriety as Churchmen say so of the London University. To remind me of the Divinity Hall is nothing to the point: for, *first*, the class held there is not designed for all the students; the Anatomy class makes it as much a medical education, as does the Divinity class make it a religious education: and, *secondly*, Divinity is not taught in that Hall so much with the design of making the students personally religious, as with the design of qualifying them in the science of Theology for the teaching of others: their personal religion is understood to be taught them elsewhere.

Let the State, if it judge proper, take upon itself to furnish the means of a secular education; but let it be left to the Church, as the Lord hath ordained, in the pious instructions of parents, guardians, pastors, Sabbath-evening school teachers, or week-day Voluntary teachers, to incul-

he take my assurance that I continue to regard him with unfeigned esteem. I had even almost forgotten his *lapsus* in the matter of the Magdalenes, when he endeavoured to prejudice *even them* against the Voluntaries. The introduction of his name on the present occasion, is to be ascribed entirely to his Episcopalian fellowship. O Doctor! Doctor! take lessons from Mr. Willis.

cate religion on the youthful mind. I make little doubt, that in the march of education we shall soon have daily teachers of religion, to whom children will be sent for an hour, not only to be instructed in the system of the Christian faith, but to have its principles inculcated on their consciences.

I conclude with an extract from an admirable paper, in that excellent little periodical, the *Belfast Christian Liberator*. Had I been aware, before I wrote the above, how nearly the writer's views coincide with my own, even to such an extent as in some cases to assume the same expression, I would not have troubled myself with writing any thing of my own; and I preserve what I have written, especially for gaining some credit to myself, by showing my thoughts run in the same course as that in which those run of one who is obviously a person of no mean consideration.

“Again, should children be taught nothing but the Bible? No man values the Bible more highly than I do. None can contend more strenuously for its supreme and *exclusive* authority in matters of religion. I most cordially agree with the illustrious CHILLINGWORTH, that ‘the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.’ That is, the Bible is the fountain of *religious truth*, and they acknowledge no other. Philosophers have objected to the Bible, because it does not give a true account of astronomy; and the answer furnished to this objection is, ‘the Bible was not intended to teach astronomy, but *religion*.’ It was intended to point a fallen world, whose guilt and wretchedness it faithfully describes, to HIM who is a refuge from the wrath to come; whose blood and righteousness received by faith, are the ground of our acceptance with the Father, and whose SPIRIT prepares the redeemed for the inheritance of the saints in light. The Bible is, in fact, a *history of salvation* from the first promise to fallen Adam, till the day when Emmanuel will say to the congregated myriads of his people, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Again I assert, the Bible was designed to teach religion, and *nothing but religion*, and the man who would thrust it out of its appropriate sphere, and convert it into a manual for teaching spelling, reading, writing, cyphering, grammar, geography, history, mechanics, astronomy, &c. &c. evinces more egregious folly than the Turk, who, as



an excuse for destroying a valuable library, declared, that if those books contradicted the Koran, they were *false*, and if they agreed with it they were *unnecessary*; and in either case ought to be destroyed! Among Christians, none but the wildest visionary, some gloomy anchorite, some dreaming quietest, or bewildered separatist would think of acting on this principle in reference to the Bible. And I cannot but think that some Protestant divines in Ireland, are labouring under a strange hallucination, or sadly blinded by party spirit on the subject of education.

“The melancholy truth is, that our moral atmosphere is so crowded,—the rays of truth are so fantastically refracted by prejudiced interest, and party animosity, that it is peculiarly difficult to see any important national question in its proper light.

“If any system of education be *national*, it must be *non-religious*. If it be *religious*, either of two things will follow. First, The whole nation must receive a *literary* education, bound up in the peculiarities of one particular creed, like a grain of sugar in the heart of a bitter pill, for which they *must pay*, but which they may swallow or not as they please. And this is virtually an *addition of funds* and resources to the Established Church of this country. Or, secondly, The peculiar creed of each denomination, their catechisms and confessions, must form part and parcel of the education which the government imparts at the public expense, and this would be a virtual establishment of every religion in the land! I can conceive of nothing more calculated to perpetuate the reign of anti-christian bigotry, sectarian jealousy, superstition, and intolerance, than the establishment of a number of exclusive systems of education, sanctioned and supported by government. I am persuaded (and I know my Catholic countrymen well) that a system of national education, founded on sound principles, and administered in a liberal spirit, which *would not interfere with religion at all*, would do more in ten years to improve the population of this country, than all the existing societies can hope to accomplish in a century to come. *These* might induce a few individuals to come, from time to time, within the sphere of their operations; *that* would speedily leaven the *whole mass* of the people, and prepare the way for a moral revolution the most decided.

“Persons who can see only one side of a question may object, that none but an infidel would recommend a *non-*

*religious* education. Nor do I recommend any such thing. What I recommend is a non-religious *national* education. The objection supposes that the children learn nothing any where but at school, and that their only teacher is the school-master. But where are their *parents*, and their *ministers*, and the *Sunday-schools*? While the schoolmaster trains the mental faculties, may not *they* cultivate the religious principles? May not these two processes go on *consentaneously*, though not conducted by the *same* person? Look at our colleges. Every professor does not teach *theology*, and yet theology is taught. Intercourse with well-instructed Protestant children would very soon wear off the most objectionable peculiarities of Romanism. Right principles of reasoning would be cultivated—early friendships would be formed—the fiendish spirit of partyism, which would plant the standard of religion on heaps of murdered bodies, and amid streams of human blood, would give place to that charity which thinketh no evil, and knows no distinction of persons.—Are the people blind? Then you will not open their eyes unless they previously engage to look fully on the mid-day splendour of the sun! Whereas, they, thinking that this would dazzle them and bewilder them more than ever, prefer practising a little in the shade. Open their eyes, and leave the rest to God!—Are they perishing for lack of knowledge? They will take the water of life in their own vessel, or in their hand; but you require them absolutely to kneel down and drink from the fountain! Are you justified in imposing such restrictions on that which is the free boon of heaven? Beware how you thwart the purposes of a merciful God! ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’ Impose no conditions which your MASTER has not imposed. Ah, narrow-minded, selfish man! It is well that such a being is not the governor of the universe. God causes his sun to shine on the *evil* and the good alike; but you will not allow the sun of knowledge to shine on any, unless they first promise to look through your spectacles; lest, by possibility, they should do something wrong,—lest peradventure, a Voltaire or a Byron should rise up amongst them. And suppose there did, what is that to *you*? The man who would prefer a nation of ignorant savages, to a nation of educated, that is, civilized men, should go and live among the filthy Hottentots. His *taste* is peculiar, and for tastes there is no accounting.

“It is better, to be sure, to have a purely Scriptural educa-

tion for all the people. But the parents, the natural guardians of the children, will not consent. You may reply, that they would, only for the priests. Well, but they acquiesce in the priest's authority,—an authority which you cannot destroy *directly*, no, nor *indirectly*, if you persevere in opposing a liberal system of education. We should grapple with things as they *are*, and not waste our time speculating about things as they *ought to be*.

“I have been led to pursue this discussion, Mr. Editor, much farther than I intended. I was about to offer some remarks on the suicidal spirit in which some religionists cry out, ‘NOTHING BUT the Bible!’ There is the Episcopalian, for instance, with his thirty-nine articles and three creeds, his catechism, canons, and liturgy, with the church ‘*deciding* matters of controversy;’ also, the three sections of the Presbyterian Church, with their ‘catechisms,’ and ‘confession,’ and the civil magistrate presiding in Synods with Divine authority. Now, surely, these are something *beside* the Bible! And moreover, they have come in to jostle the Bible out of its *own peculiar province*! I could dwell, Sir, on this manifest inconsistency, but as the subject might seem invidious, and would probably irritate some good men, I forbear.”—*Christian Liberator*, No. II.



LECTURES SECOND AND FOURTH:  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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THE SCRIPTURE ARGUMENT.

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## LECTURE II.

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IN an earlier period of this controversy, I had occasion to notice the different answers which had been given to the question, What is an Ecclesiastical Establishment? some of them more comprehensive and some more restricted in regard to the elements essential to its constitution. Having adverted to the wide distance between the high ground of the Warburtonian *alliance*, and the comparatively low ground of Paley's *scheme of instruction*, I adopted the latter as my standard, conceiving it to be the fairest for the side of our opponents, and quite as moderate as they could reasonably desire. "The three essential elements of an Establishment," according to this celebrated writer, "are, 1. A clergy, or an order of men secluded from other professions, to attend upon the services of religion:—2. A legal provision for the maintenance of the clergy:—And, 3. The confining of that provision to the teachers of a particular sect of Christianity." If, as is usually maintained, the great end of an Establishment is to supply religious instruction to the community, and especially to the poor, it is not easy to see how the *second* of these elements could, by any possibility, be dispensed with; for how could such supply be provided otherwise than by means of some kind of endowment? We can even more readily conceive the absence of the monopolizing restriction of the endowment to a particular sect, and its equal distribution amongst all parties of professing Christians:—but if you take away endowment, or pecuniary provision, altogether, you take away the only means by which the proposed end can be attained: for how is instruction to be furnished

without teachers and places of assembly? and how are such teachers to be maintained, and such places erected and upheld, without funds?—Yet lower ground still has recently been taken. To the abstract idea of an Establishment, it has been alleged, an endowment, or pecuniary provision, is not essential. Among those who have taken this ground is the Rev. Mr Cunningham, of Edinburgh. In his lecture on the lawfulness of union between Church and State,—the first in a series now in course of being delivered in the Scottish metropolis,—he takes the position, that a church may, in a certain sense, be established, and there may really exist a union or connexion between Church and State, when there is no State endowment. “It is quite possible,” says he, “that the State, or the supreme civil rulers, on becoming “Christian, and considering the duty which they owe to religion “and to the church, may see it incumbent upon them to establish the church, by giving it the sanction and countenance “of civil authority, or, what is substantially the same thing, “giving it a *public official declaration of their approbation “and good-will*, while at the same time the situation of the “church may be such as to render a State endowment unnecessary.” And then we have many pages of argument, on this “purely abstract” theory,—argument in support of “*some kind of union*,” “*some friendly connexion*,” “*some alliance*,” in opposition to those who deny any relation between the two, in any degree, or in any circumstances. But who are they? That there may be a relation,—nay that there is and ought to be a relation, and a friendly relation too, between the church and the State,—that is, between the members of the spiritual community of Jesus Christ and the civil government under which they live, who is there that questions? It is the duty, and must ever be the interest of the State, to afford its impartial protection to the members of that community, in the exercise of their religious principles, according to what they deem the will of their heavenly King;—and it is equally the duty and the interest of the subjects of Christ to seek the good of their country, and to diffuse the influence of those principles, of which the tendency has ever been to promote peace, and loyalty, and obedience to the laws, and general prosperity. This is a kind of friendly connexion, such as does not, in the least degree, interfere with perfect separation, and mutual independence.—But who does not see, that all such argumentation about what is admitted to be a pure abstraction, is grappling with nothing,—is no better than “beating the air?” It were, assuredly, a

very harmless thing, were the head of the State to issue a proclamation, declaratory to all his loyal subjects of his preference of episcopacy to presbyterianism or independency, and of any particular system of religious doctrines in connexion with this form of ecclesiastical order; a proclamation, which annexed no exclusive privileges of any kind to the approved faith and discipline, but left all to choose for themselves, without advantage on the one hand or forfeiture on the other, whether they would have the honour of being of the court religion, or, judging of the mind of God for themselves, follow the dictates of an enlightened conscience. An Establishment, without an endowment, and without exclusive civil privileges, is no more than a theoretical fancy, which could never have occasioned any strife either for or against it. We might say of any such government proclamation, "*Valeat quantum valere potest!*" let those mind it who will:—but a barer bone of contention there could not well be.—All such reasoning as that to which I have alluded is sheer trifling with a serious question; under an assent to general abstractions, deceiving the mind into a fallacious submission to something widely different; and indicating an unmanly reluctance to grapple at once with the realities of the case.

By such a view of an Establishment the necessity would be removed of all dispute about the respective claims to preference of the voluntary or the compulsory system of provision for the maintenance of Christian ordinances; inasmuch as the latter would have no existence.—But it is manifest, that instead of wrangling about a Utopian theory, we must take Establishments as they are, and as they have always been. I must be allowed, then, to assume, that a church established by the State is a church taken under the patronage and pecuniary support of the State,—and that a church unendowed is a church unestablished.—And, in considering the great general question of Establishments, we are considering a question which involves the most important and interesting views of divine truth. Next to right conceptions of the Gospel of Christ, are scriptural views of his kingdom. If they do not directly affect those doctrines of which the faith is connected with salvation, they do most materially affect the whole practical working of the principles of his mediatorial administration, in subserviency to its present efficiency, its progressive advancement, and its final triumph.—If, therefore, it is our duty to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints," surely such a subject must be en-

titled to a portion at least of the same earnestness. We cannot allow it to be set aside, as undeserving of serious discussion ;—as some, under the false pretence, or the imbecile reality, of superior spiritual-mindedness, are accustomed to deal with many other points, which go by the convenient but often mischievous designation of non-essentials. In last lecture, the first of this series, the present was ably shown to be a fair subject of controversy. And controversy is not a word from which any well-constituted mind should shrink. If it be conducted in the spirit of the Master whom we serve, it is an important and indispensable means of eliciting truth. In the sight of the great Searcher of hearts, and in the prospect of our final account, let us see to it that such be the spirit in which, on our part, it is prosecuted. It is, alas ! true, as we are sometimes made sensible by experience, that, how careful soever we may be in laying our tempers under control, and how successful soever in effecting and maintaining their subjugation, there are persons to be found, who, without a spark in their characters of manly ingenuousness towards an adversary, will persist in pronouncing us under the dominance of feelings and motives to which our bosoms have been strangers :—but there are, at the same time, amongst the party to which we stand opposed, not a few fellow-Christians, who will duly appreciate, and be suitably influenced by, the Christian spirit of our warfare :—and, at all events, whatever may be the treatment we receive from fellow-men, we must never allow ourselves to forget that “He that judgeth us is the Lord.”—“Herein,” like Paul, “let us exercise ourselves, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.”

I have formerly taken my stand in the Bible argument ;—and, leaving it to my hearers to form their own judgment of the ingenuousness of the charge, that, while I profess to draw my proofs only from the Bible, I have “taken special care, in every approach I have made to argument on the subject, to argue from *any thing but the Bible*,”—I take my stand there still. I do so for two reasons :—*First*, Because it is, in truth, the only authority in the case ;—all appeal to other sources of argument, to the overlooking of this, being in itself strangely preposterous, as well as dishonouring in the extreme to the great Head of the church, of whose kingdom the New Testament is the authenticated statute-book :—and, *Secondly*, Because the settlement of the question on this ground supersedes at once every other species of argumentation.—I am very far from

meaning that no other is of any worth. But what, I ask, is the natural and legitimate course of procedure? Surely, to come, directly and in the first instance, to the inspired record of our Sovereign's will. When we have ascertained, by such appeal, what that will is, we may then, on such grounds as may suggest themselves, demonstrate the consistency of his decisions and commands with expediency and enlightened reason; and point out the manifestations, in the constitution of his church, as in other departments of his works, of the "manifold wisdom of God." But, to begin with endeavouring, by our own speculations, to determine, on the principles of right reason and expediency, what, in the circumstances of the case, would be *best*,—and, when we have done this, to compare the results with the dictates of inspiration,—is to come to the Bible with such preconceptions in our minds, and such prepossessions in their favour, as may materially bias and mislead our judgments, strongly inclining us to interpret what we find there in accordance with our previous notions of rectitude or of expediency, and to expend the ingenuity of a refined and perverse criticism in supporting the credit of our own wisdom. The wisdom of "ceasing from our own wisdom," while it is the most difficult and rare of attainment, is the most valuable wisdom of all.—What is the course pursued by us in the departments of nature? Do we first set our wits to work, in forming a theoretical universe of our own, according to conceptions previously fixed of what might be expected of divine wisdom and divine goodness? Do we not rather apply ourselves to the investigation of the productions and arrangements of nature, and from these form our estimate, and frame our demonstration, of the attributes of the Maker?—Who is the man, let me ask, that does most honour to God? Is it not he who renounces most entirely his own wisdom, and submits most implicitly to the dictation of his word?—who, instead of either demanding reasons or calculating consequences, rests satisfied with the simple intimation of the divine will? It is thus, certainly, that we truly honour either his authority, his wisdom, or his love,—when we go forward in the way he marks out for us, in the undoubting assurance that implicit obedience to his will can never ultimately be injurious, but must in all cases prove beneficial, in promoting the glory of his name, the prosperity of his cause, the effectuation of his purposes, and the happiness of his creatures. I know no principle of greater importance; and I urge it anew, though at the risk of being charged with vain repeti-



tion,—that in every instance in which the Lord of the conscience lays down a rule for us, we have nothing to do but to follow it. The stronger our faith, the more prompt, and fearless, and uncompromising, will be our obedience.

Few things, I must confess, have surprised me more, in the present controversy, than to see Christian men,—good and great men,—commencing an argument, of which the object is to ascertain the constitution and laws of the kingdom of Christ, with an appeal to the dictates of *natural reason*.—In the first place, the adoption of a process so circuitous, on such a subject, seems to involve a reflection on the sufficiency, either in simplicity or in fulness, of the divine directory. Why should it be necessary to prepare for an examination of the instructions and laws which are there given us, by a preliminary discussion of natural principles and the suggestions of reason?—In the second place, there appears to be something strangely incongruous in making an appeal to natural reason for the determination of questions relative to the constitution of the Christian church! What can we possibly determine on such a subject, from such a source? If it be said, the appeal relates, not directly to the constitution of the Christian church, but only to the great general principle of the incorporation of religion with civil polity, various questions will then remain to be asked and answered, such as—What religion is? and whether that which had place in regard to such religions as nature dictated, be equally suitable for the religion of the New Testament? How can such questions be answered, but by a direct appeal to the New Testament itself? And why not at once begin, where, after all our previous speculations, we must end?—Why not come, in the first instance, with an humble teachable spirit (the only qualification necessary for the right understanding of it) to that inspired record, from which alone we can learn, either the principles of the religion of Christ, or his will with regard to the profession, support, and propagation of it?—Still further:—I need not tell you what the result has been of the exercise of natural reason in the things of God. What has it actually produced? A theory of what is called “natural religion,” constructed at the light of divine revelation, is a very different thing from natural religion, when ascertained by universal experience, in countries where that light is not enjoyed. What have all the unrevealed religions of mankind been? Systems, confessedly of polytheistic superstition and folly,—of which the “gods many and lords many” have been worshipped with rites

suited to their respective characters,—rites frivolous, ferocious, and vile,—and, all of them, external, anti-spiritual, heartless. Now, surely, that which was quite compatible with the nature of such religions might be far from suiting the religion of Christ,—the pure, spiritual, heart religion, of the gospel.—Nay more:—it is quite possible to argue, on exceedingly plausible grounds,—grounds which, on some points, it might not be easy to dispute, or to prove fallacious, for the propriety and expediency of the State taking this religion under its patronage, incorporating it with its civil institutes, supporting it from its resources, and conferring peculiar privileges on certain classes of its professors, for the purpose of encouraging its diffusion, and promoting its influence:—but let the case be ever so plausible which human sagacity may reason out, it is still but a hazardous ground on which to place the determination of any thing that relates to God’s institutions and designs. The infinitely Wise might say, in regard to all the devices of our wisdom,—“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” He might say so here. If he saw, that such association would impair the purity, the spirituality, and the distinctiveness of his religion, and, while promoting the “form” of it, weaken and hinder its power,—he might lay his authoritative *veto* on all the conclusions of our sagacity, and address to us the humbling but salutary reproof,—“If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” And then, of what avail are all our speculations?—the question still comes to be—the only question to which an answer can settle the point in dispute—what is God’s mind?—what saith the scripture? This is the decision to which we must bow; and in every case the divine declaration will be found to hold true,—“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways.”

Let not any of my hearers be startled by what I said a little ago, with regard to the religions of the Gentile world,—that what was suitable enough for such systems, might not be suitable for the true religion:—let not any, I say, be startled,—either friends in the way of apprehension, or opponents in the way of triumph,—as if I were getting myself into a dilemma in regard to the religion of the Jewish people,—inasmuch as that was the true religion, and yet that religion was actually established as the national religion of Judea. We shall come to that case by and by; when, from its peculiar nature and circum-

stances, I hope to make it apparent, that the dilemma is one in semblance only, and not in reality. Before proceeding to it, however, there are one or two topics which the advocates of Establishments have introduced into the discussion, and which, as they take precedence of it in the order of the Old Testament history, demand some brief previous notice.

To the first of these, indeed, I have hesitated whether I should at all advert; and yet, the ground having been taken with the apparent satisfaction and triumph of some of the leading supporters of Establishments, it may be worth while just to touch upon it; the more especially, as there is nothing so weak as not to be caught at by some minds, in the absence of something better.—It has been alleged, then, that even in the history of the earliest period of our world's existence, we have a practical demonstration of the inefficiency of the voluntary principle;—that, notwithstanding its operation, and that too, in the outset, with every advantage and under the most favourable auspices, the antediluvian race of men became speedily so universally corrupt as to draw down upon them the vengeance of heaven, which, with the exception of eight souls, swept them all away.—Were it not for the seriousness of our subject, and the consequent indecorum of treating any part of it with levity, we should feel tempted to amuse ourselves a little with the conclusion implied in this mode of arguing, that had there but existed a religious Establishment before the flood, the world might have escaped that fearful catastrophe.—Without insulting your understandings, and taxing your patience, by any enlarged refutation of such a phantasy, permit me to remark—1. That, an Establishment being, from its nature, a national institution, and there being, at the time of the original apostasy, no nation, there *could not*, of course, be any thing of the kind, when the tide of corruption set out in its progress. Such checks as were then in operation could be those only of parental and domestic influence.—2. When men multiplied into tribes, and came to be nationally considered, it is admitted that we have no traces of a national Establishment of religion. Now, without dwelling on the circumstance that here we have one exception at least, or more than one, to the universality of the dictate of natural reason, on which the supporters of Establishments lay so great a stress,—I simply ask, *Why* was there no such institution? When our opponents allege the fact, whether do they mean to insinuate a complaint

against *men*, or against *God*?—Against *God*! they will say, far be it that we should presume to complain of *Him*; our complaint is against *man*: the blame lies with *man*, and with *man* only. Let our friends on that side of the question, then, recollect, that, on their own showing, the complaint involves an admission, that, *had* any such thing existed as a national religious Establishment, it could have been nothing more than a *human institution*; and that by the authority of any merely human institution, we never could feel ourselves bound.—If, in reply, they shall allege, that *God* acted *judicially* in withholding such an institution, and leaving men to their own devices, we answer,—this is *begging the question*;—it is assuming the very point to be proved, namely, that Establishments *are* calculated to secure the maintenance and advancement of pure and undefiled religion;—even so much so, as to render the absence of them a punitive judgment.—3. If the complaint is not against *God*, then it is admitted that *God* did his part towards man,—the part of righteousness and of mercy. He did not leave himself *without witness*; but so ordered every part of his procedure as to leave his fallen creatures *without excuse*. There were not only before their eyes, in heaven, and earth, and sea, the visible signs of his being and perfections; there were at the same time, from himself, rites of instituted worship, especially those of sacrifice and other typical observances; there was early inspiration, announcing, by “holy men of *God* who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” the truths, and promises, and threatenings of *Jehovah*. To what extent this primitive inspiration reached, it is impossible for us to ascertain. We have “*Enoch* the seventh from *Adam*” prophesying of the second coming of the Lord to judgment, and, without doubt, of the first coming of the Lord for salvation. We have *Noah* himself “a preacher of righteousness.” And whether it was in the person of *Noah* alone that *Christ*, by his Spirit, during the 120 years of his suspended vengeance “while the ark was a-preparing, went and preached to the spirits now in prison,” we know not: there might be many more during both that and the preceding time. At all events, there was enough of manifestation to vindicate the Creator, and to condemn the creature. And yet, it seems, there was entirely left out of operation the most efficient of all means,—the means which might have succeeded when all else failed,—of preserving true religion and pure morality amongst mankind.—4. Suppose I were maintaining



a matter-of-fact argument for the corruption of human nature, drawn from the early and universal degeneracy of the primitive generations of men, might I not be perfectly justified in reversing the line of reasoning thus maintained by our opponents? They insist that the degeneracy affords satisfactory evidence of the inefficiency and worthlessness of the Voluntary principle:—am not I entitled to use this very inefficiency in proof of the melancholy force of corruption, and to place my argument thus—that so resistlessly mighty was this force, as to bear down all before it; so that, notwithstanding all the means of counteraction which the Divine Being saw fit to employ,—means which must have been the best,—the best adapted, that is, for securing from all reflexion the honour of his own name, and for depriving his guilty creatures of every ground of self-vindication, or of palliative apology, the corruption spread through the whole mass, and drew down the merited vengeance?—I leave it to the judgment of my hearers, whether such a representation is not more honouring to the Godhead, than that which imputes to him, even although on principles which leave his equity unimpeached, the withholding from his creatures of the only efficient means of counteracting their depravity!

I need not say, that the same principles of reasoning might be brought to bear, with the same conclusiveness, on the accounts we have of the second trial of human nature in the descendants of the second great progenitor of our race.—But I have already spent too much time on such an argument.

There is another ground taken by our opponents, derived from an incident recorded in the patriarchal history:—I refer to the case of *Melchisedec*.

I have never been able to regard the use made of this case otherwise than as indicative of a felt scarcity in the resources of argument:—but, without vapouring about its irrelevancy, let us look at it.—The mention made in the history of this singular personage is comprised in three verses, Gen. xiv. 18—20. “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.” The record is one of which we should never ourselves have been able to make anything beyond mere conjecture, but for the inspired allusion to it in David, and the inspired commentary upon it in Paul. It is well for us to observe



what it is we are taught by them. It is, that Melchisedec was one of the most distinguished typical representatives of Christ ; —in *name*, the king of righteousness, and in *place*, the king of peace ;—uniting in his person the royal and the sacerdotal characters,—as king of Salem, and priest of the most high God ;—the superior of Abraham, even of the great progenitor of Israel, the father of the faithful, the friend of God,—a superiority indicated by his “receiving tithes of Abraham, and blessing him that had the promises.” This superiority, we are further taught, was a decisive proof of the superiority of the priesthood of Melchisedec to that of Levi the descendant of Abraham ; and, by consequence, of the superiority of *his* priesthood who was “called after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron.”—This is, substantially, though without the variety of interesting and beautiful illustration, the amount of the apostolic commentary on the case of Melchisedec. I mention it chiefly for the purpose of impressing the remembrance, that, whatever else may be drawn from it is not to be regarded as having the authority of New Testament interpretation, but is only a human inference. If, however, the inference be obvious and legitimate, it is not, we admit, merely on account of its inferential character, to be rejected. Let us see, then, how it stands.—The lawfulness and propriety of the union between church and state, are conceived to be countenanced by the union in the person of Melchisedec of the royal and the priestly functions : inasmuch as we cannot but suppose, that Melchisedec, as a king, would exercise his royal prerogative in support of his priesthood ; and, as a priest, his priestly influence in maintaining the rights, and giving efficiency to the laws, of his civil administration.—Now, it is generally admitted as one of the canons of legitimate reasoning, that what proves too much proves nothing. The full and fair inference from the case of Melchisedec would be, the propriety of uniting the civil and ecclesiastical functions in the persons of Christian kings. If the case proves any thing, it proves this. Yet this is an inference which no one attempts to deduce. Dr Inglis says, “In the “case of Melchisedec, the functions of a priest and of a king “were, in their exercise, more strictly combined than they “now are for the support of any Establishment which it is “the object of these pages to defend.” But why not go the full length of what the case exemplifies ? It appears to be thought, that, since the *more* strict combination existed, we

are entitled, *a fortiori*, to infer the legitimacy of the *less* strict. But this, I apprehend, is fallacious ground. We are not entitled to alter and to modify divine examples. If they are meant for our imitation at all, we should regard them as they are,—not taking a part and leaving a part,—following what accords with our notions of expediency, and declining the rest. That which is here exemplified is, obviously, the union of the royal and sacerdotal offices in the same person. If it *be* an example, there is a presumptuous deficiency in the imitation, if it is not followed out to this extent.—When it is asked, “In what other way will the opponents of Ecclesiastical Establishments account for what God was, in this case, pleased both to permit and to sanction?”—*i. e.* in what *other* way, than as a warrant for the reciprocal support of the Church by the State, and of the State by the Church?—our answer is at hand. It is furnished by the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is to be found both in what he says, and in what he does not say. He teaches us to regard the case of Melchisedec, as designed to be a peculiarly appropriate and perfect type of the royal pontificate of the Son of God—even of him who is “a priest upon his throne.” This is what he *does* teach.—He does *not* teach us to consider the case as, in any way, furnishing an example for our imitation. Not a word of the kind is to be found. We look in vain for the remotest hint of any principle in it, by which our conduct is to be regulated, in regard either to ecclesiastical or civil affairs. There is nothing about Church and State in the *inspired* commentary; it is only to be found in the *uninspired*, and therefore the unauthoritative. The case was manifestly peculiar. It was not at all intended as a pattern for any human institution, but only as a type of things divine. We are on the surest and safest ground, when we consider the apostle as having, in his interpretation, exhausted the lessons which the case was designed to teach. We know so little about it,—being in entire ignorance as to the character and condition even of the people among whom, as a priest, this singular and mysterious personage officiated; it is altogether, in the statement of it, so succinct and so obscure; that inferences from it, beyond what the apostle deduces, can have nothing in them of authority, and nothing therefore of obligation.—When I speak of the case of Melchisedec as *peculiar*, I do not mean that there existed nothing in the same age bearing *any* resemblance to it. In the patriarchal dispensation, the religious and the

civil functions were to a certain extent united in the Heads of families, and of what may be called *Clans*. Thus it was with Abraham, with Job, and others. But even under the Mosaic economy, this union was done away;—the kingly and priestly functions being then separated, and becoming, distinctly, typical of offices, to be afterwards permanently combined in Christ.—And since in him both the kingly and the priestly found their fulfilment and termination; unless we convert the very combination of the two *in Christ himself* into a warrant for the alliance of Church and State, the example utterly fails us. But there are few, it is presumed, who will think of going quite so high for their pattern.

With regard to that part of the brief notice of Melchisedec, which is pressed into the service of Establishments as the pattern, or the justification, of the *mode of their support*, it will not be necessary that we detain you long. I can do little more than repeat, as already I have been partly doing, what others have said before me.—*In the first place*, What was the tithe which was given by Abraham to Melchisedec? It was, as the history tells us, the tenth of the spoil which he had taken in war. Now, “by the law of Moses,” says Mr Spence,\* “the spoils taken in war belonged *wholly to the victors*; (Deut. xx. 14.) and we have no reason to suppose “that a different custom obtained in the days of Abraham. “If he, therefore, gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchisedec, “priest of the most high God, he did so voluntarily, and “beyond what any law of God required, even as David and “his captains did, when they dedicated to the Lord ‘the “spoils won in battles, to maintain the house of the Lord.’” —“This, therefore, instead of being a compulsory”—or even, he might have said, an *obligatory*—“payment of tithe to the “priest of the most high God, was a free-will offering, and “is a bright example of the voluntary principle, which “leads those pious persons who embrace it, not only to give “to the Lord willingly when his law requires them, but also “to give, in accordance with the spirit of religion, on every “fitting occasion, although not specifically mentioned, or expressly enjoined, by the letter of the law.”—*Secondly*, There is no proof whatever of Melchisedec having been supported by tithe-payments; far less of his having received them in any such capacity as that which he has been gratuitously represented as sustaining,—the “Head of the patriarchal priesthood.”

\* Comparison of the Voluntary and Compulsory Systems, &c.

This is going beyond both the Mosaic narrative and the Pauline commentary. As one who wore a crown as well as a mitre, he could not stand *in need* of such maintenance:—nor, indeed, does Dr Inglis himself argue from the case for the *regular maintenance* by tithe even of the priesthood of those times:—"I do not say that these cases,"—(he is including that of Jacob's vow, which is an instance of the same voluntary description, only that Jacob, as Mr Marshall justly observes, "was the consumer of his own tithes, building altars and offering sacrifices, with a liberal hand, at Bethel and at Shechem, and wherever else his occasions led him,"—and, from its coming under the same category of free-will offerings, we deem it needless to dwell further upon it)—"I do not say that these cases afford decisive evidence that it was by means of tithes that any of the priests under the patriarchal dispensation were maintained, *exclusively, and from year to year*. The facts with which we are made acquainted do not enable us either to affirm or deny this position."—But this representation hardly comes up to the truth. We have, in these cases, instances, I will not say of the *payment* of tithes, for the word payment naturally suggests the idea of *debt*, but of the giving or bestowment of tithes, such as were manifestly occasional and voluntary. Of occasional and voluntary tithe-giving, then, we *have* evidence in these cases,—the evidence of facts;—but of stated or obligatory tithe-paying we have *no* evidence, there being no facts of the kind then on record, nor any statutes enjoining it. I am to be understood as speaking of patriarchal times. Of the sense in which tithe-paying was obligatory under the Jewish economy we may have occasion hereafter to speak; when we shall endeavour to show you, that the sense in which it was *obligatory* is perfectly consistent with the sense in which we affirm it to have been *voluntary*; although no little pains have been taken to perplex people's minds on the subject, by confounding things that are essentially different.—Meantime I conclude my observations on the case of Melchisedec, with remarking,—and I would be understood to make the remark more in the way of a passing suggestion than of a serious argument,—that, if our friends on the opposite side of this question *will* have something founded upon it, perhaps it would be as legitimate an inference as any they have been able to deduce,—that, if the union of Church and State is to be at all considered as symbolized or countenanced by the union of the royal and the priestly offices in the person of



Melchisedec,—then might there be found in it some little support to the *identity of Church and State property*. Melchisedec the priest was the same with Melchisedec the king. What sustained the one sustained the other. What belonged to the one belonged to the other. If, therefore, Melchisedec the king represents the State, and Melchisedec the priest represents the Church, and the meeting of the two functions in his one person represents the connexion of the one with the other,—then what belongs to the Church belongs to the State, and what belongs to the State belongs to the Church. The properties are identified. This deduction is at least as legitimate as any other. But the truth is, the case affords no ground of argument at all; and would never have been appealed to, but for the scantiness of better material.

We now come forward to what may be considered the palladium of our opponents,—the *Jewish Establishment*. There was a national Establishment in Israel, it is alleged:—the God of Israel could not give the sanction of his authority, by direct institution and constant support, to what was, in the very principle of it, wrong:—and we have, therefore, in this recorded case, an example in point of a national religion, and a national establishment of it, having the full weight of divine authority, and more than warranting our imitation.

Now, taking this reasoning in this general form, it has a plausible aspect, and has accordingly imposed upon many minds. It shall be my endeavour to show, that any plausibility which belongs to it, arises solely from the confounding, by the use of general terms, of one thing with another, from which it is essentially different; and that the plausibility vanishes as soon as the two things are compared.—I have, on a former occasion, urged, as my first objection to the alleged example in this case, that “imitation is, in the nature of the thing, *impossible*:—that it is a case which comes not within the range of the imitable:—that the only imitation possible must be on the part of God himself:—that, the Jewish constitution being a *theocracy*, in which Jehovah assumed to that people a special relation,—a relation which he never sustained to any other portion of our race,—the relation of their King, or civil Head,—himself conducting the administration of their government, by a system of supernatural interposition, and immediate manifestation of his presence and authority,—none but Jehovah himself can imitate this:—and that to talk of imitation, in a case so thoroughly peculiar, or to call that imitation, in which the essence of the

thing imitated is of necessity wanting, is the height of absurdity.”\*—I have seen no reason, from any thing I have since heard or read on the subject, to retract or to modify this statement.—I have no wish to debate about words. Some have questioned the propriety of calling the Jewish a national church. But, dismissing this as a needless refinement, I still insist upon it, that, its *theocratic* character being no mere circumstantial difference, but belonging to its very nature, that which calls itself an imitation of it wants its most essential feature; wants the very thing that warranted its existence; and the want subjects the professed imitation to the charge of daring and profane presumption.—I grant that Jehovah instituted a national church:—but then, he instituted such a church, *with himself as the Supreme Head of ecclesiastical and civil government to the nation*, which thus sustained the twofold capacity of Church and State.—I ask again, *can* this be imitated?—or is the conclusion at all a legitimate one, that because Jehovah instituted, and consequently, approved a national church *with* such a theocratic superintendence, therefore he must necessarily approve of a national church *without* it? Is the difference between the two cases so trivial and circumstantial, as not to affect the validity of any inference from the one to the other? That God instituted a national church where the government was *divine*, must form a very questionable ground for concluding that he approves of a national church where the government is merely *human*. So far from the difference being immaterial, it amounts to the difference between human and divine. That surely may be a right and a safe constitution under the management of God, which is the very reverse of right and safe under the management of men. And may we not consider the Divine Being as having, by that very singular and *unique* constitution of civil and ecclesiastical government which subsisted in Israel, impressively taught the lesson, that in no other circumstances than under his immediate superintendence, is such a union of the civil and the sacred admissible with safety or with benefit? Seeing the only instance of an establishment sanctioned by divine authority is one under a theocracy, who will undertake to prove that the theocracy is not *the very thing necessary* to its having his approbation?

When we have affirmed imitation impossible, we have been charged with contradicting *facts*. Imitation cannot be impossible; for Christ and his apostles *did* imitate. But what, I

\* Sermon on Civil Establishments of Christianity.



ask, did they imitate? Did they imitate *this*? If not, they did not imitate the only thing to which the affirmation applied. They imitated certain particulars of the ancient ceremonial, it is alleged, in the rites of baptism and the Lord's supper; in the number of the apostles and of the seventy disciples, they imitated the number of the tribes of Israel and of the Jewish Sanhedrim; in some parts of the institutions of Christian worship and church order, they imitated corresponding parts of the worship and order of the synagogue. But this is drivelling. Do any of these imitations (supposing them granted, and it is not to our present purpose to dispute them,)—do any of them prove the possibility of that which alone was affirmed impossible—the possibility of man's imitating what, from its very nature, it was competent only for God to do? Supposing Jesus and his apostles to have followed, in the constitution of the Christian church, some parts of the synagogue observances—what follows?—Why, that by this very imitation these became authorized institutions of the New Testament kingdom. Did Christ and his apostles, then, imitate the *national constitution* of the ancient church? I need not answer the question. And if they did not, the imitation must for ever be destitute of their authority.—What they *did* imitate *has* that authority; what they did *not* imitate *has it not*.—"Christ and his apostles," Mr Fleming adds, "imitated the Jewish system, in so far as " was suitable to the nature and doctrine of his dispensation." Be it so:—then, since their imitation went as far as was suitable, all imitation further than they imitated must be unsuitable. When the writer asks,—“Why may not we, in this, follow their steps?”—it ought to be a sufficient reply, and will be so to every one who “trembles at the word of the Lord,”—that we are not quite such competent judges of suitable imitation as Christ and his apostles. The *nationality* of the ancient church was no such trivial and adventitious matter of form, as that *we* could be safe in following it, when it was not followed by *them*. Our sole and simple duty is, an unreserved compliance with the divine injunction, by the voice from the excellent glory,—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:—HEAR YE HIM.”

When we say that, at the first constitution of the Christian church, there was no imitation of the nationality of the Jewish, and no association of it with the civil politics of this world,—we, in our turn, are met by our opponents with an alleged impossibility. The circumstances of the case did not, at the

time, we are reminded, at all admit of such a thing.—But mark the difference between *our* impossibility and *theirs*. Ours is the impossibility of men's doing what, from the nature of the thing, cannot be done without the concurrence of God; theirs is the impossibility of God's doing what cannot be done without the concurrence of men! Circumstances did not admit of it!—as if there were any circumstances which were not under the absolute control of Omnipotence! There may be no more than inconsideration on the part of those who give utterance to the sentiment; but in the sentiment itself there is no ordinary presumption.—The most high God was introducing a new economy, or constitution, of his church in the world. It is surely natural to suppose, that he would then place it on the footing on which he intended it should continue. Were we to represent it as impossible for the apostles and primitive disciples to effect an alliance of their religion with the civil powers, we should say no more than truth. *They* could not command this, either with Jewish or with Gentile rulers. But when the subject is the introduction of the New Testament dispensation, we must not think and speak of the agency of men. It was “the Lord's doing.” “The Lord wrought with them.” The powers of nature, and the hearts of sinners, were alike subject to his will. Was it not in his power to influence the existing authorities of those days according to his pleasure, and so to effect, from the very first, the establishment of Christianity, and provide for it the patronage and endowment of the State? To question this, is worse than either inconsiderate or presumptuous; it is impious. It is “limiting the Holy One of Israel.”—But, besides all this, such a representation is, on the part of our opponents, very inconsistent. According to them, the same thing was done at an after period. It was the Divine Being that influenced the mind and heart of Constantine the Great, to do the very thing for the necessity of which they plead. Now, surely, what was possible *then*, was not less possible three hundred years before. The heart of the Roman emperor of that time was not more easily worked upon than the heart of any one of his predecessors, or than the hearts of the Jewish rulers of apostolic days,—than that of Tiberius, or of Annas, or Caiaphas. Who will deny, that he had it in his power, with perfect facility and certainty, to insure for the Gospel the instant and hearty patronage either of the Gentile or of the Jewish powers? Who *does* deny it? we may be asked in reply. All that we mean, our opponents may allege, is, that

*then was not God's time* ;—and since, in regard to time as well as to every thing else, he can do only that which is best, this is the only impossibility we mean to affirm,—a moral impossibility, arising from the necessary rectitude, not only of the divine acts, but of the seasons selected for the doing of them. God did not *see fit* to do at first what he did see fit to do afterwards. —Let us look at the case, then, in *this* light. Most readily do we grant, that it is not ours to prescribe to the infinitely Wise, either *what* he should do, or *when* he should do it :—and, had we but ground for believing, respecting any transaction, that it was done *by divine authority*, we should have no title to find fault with the *time* at which he was pleased to fix the doing of it. But in the chain of the present argument, there is a most important link wanting, without which it has no continuity, and can support no conclusion. Had the national establishment of Christianity taken place *at first*, under the direction of the accredited vicegerents of the exalted Redeemer: and had the account of it formed a part of the *inspired record* of the erection of the New Testament kingdom ; we should then have had full assurance of its having been done by divine authority. But it is not so. No one pretends that it is. What, then, have we now ? What have we in the case of Constantine ? What more than a simple *fact in history* ? But does the mere occurrence of it, as a fact in history, give us any evidence of the divine approbation ? This will not be affirmed by any man who wishes to have credit for a sound understanding. What, then, are we to do with this fact ? To what test are we to bring it ? Is it not manifest, that there is nothing else for us, than to come back three hundred years, for the only standard by which the mind of God concerning it can be ascertained ? And is it not equally manifest, that, nothing of the kind having been done at first, and no principles having been laid down in the record, to warrant, prospectively, the future doing of it, we have all the evidence we ought to require to satisfy us, that the fact, instead of being in conformity to the mind of God, was a departure from it ?

Few things are more surprising than the use that has been made of this fact, to elicit from it an indication of the will of God ;—the amount of ingenious theorizing that has been expended upon it. All that we have said about what God *could have done* and *did not*, is admitted ;—for how, indeed, after all, could it be seriously questioned ? When we argue, however, on this ground, that what he *did not* had not his approbation,

we are met, by Dr Inglis, with the following reply:—"But if, in reference to the point in question, we allow ourselves to reason upon this ground, where is such reasoning to end? May we not argue, with equal propriety, that it was in the power of God, from the beginning, to make divine influence effectual, in all cases, for superseding the use of all outward means and outward agency?"—But where, I would ask, is the analogy between the two cases? To have any thing like an analogous case, we must have one, in which God sets out on a certain principle, a principle which thus has the sanction of his word, and continues to carry forward his measures on this principle for a period of successive centuries; and then men take upon them to innovate on this principle, and presume on the superior excellence and more promising success of another!—If, in the case supposed by Dr Inglis, God himself had commenced with a system of "outward means and outward agency," and afterwards, at whatever distance of time, it had appeared, in point of fact, that the same effects began, remarkably and numerous, to be produced *without* such means and agency,—this would have been a case, in which *the very fact* would have involved evidence of the *divine will*: for this obvious reason, that, from the nature of the fact, it could be the doing of no other than God himself;—so that the very doing of it would at once have shown that he had changed his plan. But in the case now in question, it is quite otherwise. It is throughout, and in every view of it, a case of "outward means and outward agency." When God begins on one system of such agency and such means, and another is afterwards introduced by men, we have *no evidence* in the mere fact, of the alteration having the sanction of heaven,—unless we are prepared to adopt the preposterous and fearful principle, that *fact* proves *right*,—that events permitted in Providence are, in all cases, satisfactory evidence of divine approbation,—a principle, which would stamp with "the image and superscription of Heaven," all descriptions of superstition and fanaticism, the whole Antichristian "mystery of iniquity," and every evil that is done under the sun.—I repeat, then,—that we have no way of determining in the present case, whether the procedure of Constantine had or had not the sanction of Him into whose hands "all power in heaven and earth is committed,"—but *recurring to the record*. I take the deceased and respected writer, on whose words I have been commenting, on his own ground:—"In what concerns the ways of God," says he, "we can



“safely judge of what was right or fit for him to do, only from what we know him to have actually done.” *What*, then, did he actually do, in the acknowledged exercise of his own authority? He constituted his church in a state of entire independence of the governments of this world; a spiritual kingdom, maintained and propagated by its own subjects and its own resources; *in* the world, but not *of* the world;—unindebted to earthly powers, uncontaminated by earthly alliances. *This* is what he “actually did:”—and if it be true, that “we can safely judge of what it was right or fit for him to do, only from what we know him to have actually done,”—in this, and in this only, are we warranted to believe, is rectitude and fitness.—There cannot, surely, be ground more insecure for creatures like us, than to conjecture “*excellent reasons*” why the apostles of Christ were silent in regard to particular duties,—and why, “*so far as we can see,*” their commands, had they given any, must have been so general as to be of little use, and “*in all likelihood*” not only useless but in various ways dangerous!—This, I say, is not ground for us. Poor short-sighted creatures! how far is it that *we* can see? Our only safety is in taking the revelation of God as we find it; and, instead of presuming to introduce important innovations, which to our wisdom may seem to flow from its principles and analogies, to act upon the divine interdiction, which cannot surely be less strongly applicable to the Apostolic than to the Mosaic word:—“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it.”† We take this simple position, then; a posi-

\* Brown’s Church Establishments Defended, p. 121.

† “Let us then suppose for a moment, that it was the will of Christ, that when Christianity should so far have diffused its influence as to include among its friends the most powerful persons in the empire, the emperors should then, of their own accord, lend their official aid to the faith they had formerly persecuted; I ask whether, in the circumstances of the apostolic age, it was not enough, and in perfect accordance with the spirit that pervades the precepts of Christianity, to lay down certain cardinal principles, out of which, taken along with the analogy of the Old Testament Scriptures, the duty of rulers to endow the church would naturally be seen to flow, as soon as circumstances should admit of the duty being discharged; the application of the principles in each particular case, along with all limitations and modifications, being left to be regulated by the leadings of Divine Providence, in conjunction with Christian prudence, and a sense of duty.” Ibid. page 122.—This is, in fact, leaving *all* to human discretion; inasmuch as it is by it that the “leadings of Providence” must be interpreted. I ask the respected writer, if, in sober earnest, he thinks this safe ground in such matters. Have we any right to “*suppose for a moment*” that any thing is “the will of Christ,” especially any thing of such magnitude, about which he



tion from which we cannot be moved;—and we beseech our brethren in Christ connected with the Established Church, to think of it anew, and to consider, whether, in attempting to dislodge us from it, they may not be found “fighting against God.” They cannot question the simple facts of the record. These facts were ordered by the authority of the King of Zion. If they presume to say, he *might intend it to be otherwise afterwards*, I remind them that the mere fact can never be sufficient evidence of such intention; and demand of them a new revelation, accredited by the same signs and wonders which attested the authority of the old.

We are reminded, moreover, on the present subject, that, although the *ceremonial law* was abolished, *the moral law* remains, in all its force of obligation. We grant at once the truth of the position, and the importance of the distinction. But we ask, of what avail is it in the present controversy, unless it can be proved that the national constitution of the Jewish church, and the system of tithes by which its priesthood was supported, formed a part of the moral law?—“It has ever been “the rule by human lawgivers,” it is argued, “that no law “or statute is rescinded or annulled, without due and public “notice, that so all may know what they had to do. This is “the conduct of all wise and enlightened legislators. If, in “place of rescinding a whole statute, only particular parts of “it are rescinded, the parts so rescinded are mentioned, as no “longer binding or in force; but all the rest of the statute “continues as obligatory as before. Every jurist knows this. “Regulated, therefore, by this *canon*, acknowledged on all “hands to be correct, we should have expected, when the new “law, or testament, was published, that what was to be re- “scinded would be clearly and unequivocally expressed; and “that whatever was not so expressed, and particularly except- “ed, was to remain as *obligatory* as before.”\*—Suppose the

has given no instructions and no intimations of its being his will?—Can we imagine even emperors warranted to interfere officially “*of their own accord*” with the concerns of Christ’s kingdom?—And as to this being done when “*circumstances admitted* of the duty being discharged,” what circumstances prevented its being done long before, except the absence of the *imperial will*? Could Tiberius, or any emperor between him and Constantine, not have “lent his official aid to the faith,” if he had so pleased? And could not God have so ordered it, if HE had so pleased?—And besides all this, I am at a loss for the “*cardinal principles*” referred to. In all that is said of the kingdom of Christ, I find cardinal principles of quite an opposite kind, admitting of no such innovations.

\* Fleming’s Critique on Dr Wardlaw’s Sermon, p. 12.

principle thus laid down to be granted—(and, although it is expressed in terms somewhat sweeping and indiscriminating, I feel no disposition to question it,)—mark the consequence. Whatever, in the Mosaic law, was of a *ceremonial* nature is admitted on both sides to have been done away. When the national establishment, then, is represented as having continued “*as obligatory as before*,” the obligation meant must be *moral* obligation. What, then, are we to make of the fact, that, in the constitution of the Christian community, as organized by Christ and his apostles, there was nothing of the kind;—nor any command given, that at any future period, when altered circumstances admitted of it, it should be introduced;—nor any principles laid down, such as would warrant the introduction or the expectation of it? Was there, on the part of Christ and his apostles, a suspension of the *moral obligation* of this part of the divine institutes,—a suspension continued for three centuries, and ultimately taken off by the self-assumed authority of a heathen,—or, if you like it better, of a Christian prince!—What shall we say? Is the unquestioned and unquestionable *fact* of its *actual discontinuance* not to be regarded by us as proof sufficient of its *not* having been one of those parts of the ancient system of which the authority and obligation remained? Ought we to require any further evidence of its being the divine intention that it *should* pass away, beyond the actual fact that it *did* pass away? If Christ and his apostles did not *continue* it, who is authorized to *restore* it?—The more *direct* evidence of the divine purpose we have hereafter to bring before you.

In my sermon on religious Establishments, I have charged those who would make the national church of Israel a model, —even in the general principle of it,—for the imitation of Christians, with “wilfully going back to the worldly and corrupt state of things, that has waxed old and vanished away;” with “taking for their model that which He by whom it was instituted has set aside;” with “giving preference to the ‘beggarly elements,’ and choosing the introductory and carnal condition of the church, rather than the spiritual which it introduced;” with thus “inverting God’s procedure,” and “building again the things which he has destroyed.”—I repeat the charge.

It is common, when we set aside the authority of the Jewish establishment in Christian times, to meet us with the objection, that we are *setting aside the Old Testament*, as *affording us no example*,—especially in regard to the obligations and duties

of nations.—Now, this is a charge that is certainly made without due discrimination. In taking the Scriptures as our guide, we must take them with a right understanding of the divine intention in their several parts. We do not use the word of God discriminately, or as its divine Author intended it to be used, when we use it otherwise than thus. That valuable lessons are to be learned from every part of the Scriptures, is gladly admitted. But with regard to the examples which we are bound or even authorized to follow, there is necessity for the exercise of discretion, and of prayer for divine counsel and guidance. It is very obvious, that that may be right and beneficial in certain circumstances,—*the circumstances in which God has enjoined it*,—which may be the very reverse, even wrong and injurious, in *other* circumstances. On our present subject, accordingly, the only legitimate question is, Was the national constitution of the *Jewish church designed by God* to be an example or model for the *Christian church*? This is a question which can never be satisfactorily answered by merely proving the general position—a position which no one questions—that the Old Testament Scriptures were “written for our learning,” and do contain “ensamples” for our imitation. The special inquiry immediately recurs,—*Is this one of these examples?* This is obviously *the one point* to be determined; and all discussion of general principles can serve only to mislead and bewilder the simple.

If it was the purpose and the will of God that the *nationality* of the church should be continued, then the imputation against those who go back to it for their model, or their principle, must on my part be retracted;—but if this was indeed among the characteristics of the ancient system which were to be abolished, then it stands in full force.—Now, we have already seen the *fact*. It *was* done away. The New Testament church *did* cease to be national. It ceased to be so in two senses. It ceased to be national in the comprehensiveness of its fellowship; and it ceased to be national in its dependence on state support.—The Jewish church was, in the true and full meaning of the designation, a national church. It was a church, I mean, embracing the whole community; so that citizenship in the nation constituted membership in the church. In saying that “the nation was the church, and the church the nation,” I have been misrepresented, as confounding the civil and ecclesiastical departments of the Jewish constitution, and their respective official functions and laws. All that I meant was, as any candid

and attentive reader could not fail to perceive, that they were the same *in the article of membership*, every member of the civil or political community being, in virtue of his status as a citizen, a member at the same time of the Israelitish church. Surmises have been thrown out as to the correctness of this representation. But I have seen no formal denial of it,—far less any attempt to disprove it. Were not the various religious festivals of the Jews, all of them, national observances?—All binding on the people at large? Were not all under obligation, for example, to keep that first and most distinctive of Jewish feasts—*the passover*? The only excuses for its non-observance were occasional ceremonial uncleannesses, or other incidental causes of hinderance. Where these did not exist, the obligation to the observance was universal. And so was it with the other “feasts of the Lord.” Even on the great day of annual atonement, one of the most solemnly religious ceremonies of that dispensation, what was the law?—Lev. xxiii. 29, 30. “For whatsoever soul it be, that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.”—When good king Hezekiah commenced his reign with the celebration of the passover, the messengers that bore the invitation to Judah and Israel made no distinction. They summoned all the people. What now should we think, were William the IV. to issue a proclamation, summoning all his loyal people to assemble, on a fixed day, at the metropolis of the kingdom, for the purpose of holding, as a national festival, the celebration of the ordinance of the Lord’s supper! Would this be quite in accordance with the spirit or the letter of the laws of Christ’s kingdom? Would it not rather, under the guise of godliness, be the most flagrant and presumptuous profanation?—I endeavoured, in the sermon already referred to, to show, that the principle adopted by Hooker, according to which every member of the English commonwealth is a member of the English church, *de jure* and *de facto*, is the only principle for a truly consistent and thorough-going imitation of the Jewish pattern. And, indeed, on both sides of the Tweed, whatever may be said in occasional mitigation of the well-known and fearful laxity of parochial communion in the Lord’s supper, there is, in regard to the ordinance of *baptism*, a most melancholy and mischievous approximation to national universality. We are a *baptized nation*;—and, by this means,—the natural result of an established form



of worship,—we are an extensively and miserably deluded nation,—systematically and guiltily deluded.

Why it was, that Jehovah constituted his church of old on the principle of nationality, it is not at all our present province to inquire. Our only question now is one as to *fact*:—and of the fact there can be no doubt.—During the continuance of this national system, there could not fail to be, and there always was, though at some times to a much more distressing extent than at others, a great prevalence of corrupt and nominal religious profession and fellowship. But it was a state of things that was not destined to continue. In their anticipations of the fulness of time, the inspired prophets describe it as a period of purification to the church; when “the wicked were “to be shaken out of it;” when there were “no longer to enter “into it the uncircumcised or the unclean.” The Messiah, “the “Messenger of the covenant,” is announced, as a “refiner “and purifier of silver,” who should “purify the sons of Levi, “and purge them as gold and silver, so that they might offer “to the Lord an offering in righteousness:”—*i. e.* according to Mr Scott,—who should “purify his church and the hearts of his “people from all dross, and prepare a pure race of ministers “and a spiritual priesthood, (instead of the corrupt and rejected “tribe of Levi,) who might present before him a holy worship.”—Now, where are we to look for a commentary on such predictions of change for the better in the spiritual character of the church? Is it not to the record of the actual constitution of the New Testament kingdom? And what do the facts of this record show? Is not the very first and most prominent lesson taught us by them, that the church was no longer to be national,—but to be composed of individuals chosen out of the nations by the converting and purifying grace of God? The very terms in which it is described are borrowed from the language which belonged of old to the national church of Israel, as if for the very purpose of showing, the more clearly and impressively, how different it was now to be:—1 Pet. ii. 9. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show “forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness “into his marvellous light.” Gal. vi. 16. “And as many as “walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, “even upon the Israel of God.” 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. “Be ye “not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what



“ communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath  
 “ Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with  
 “ an infidel ? and what agreement hath the temple of God with  
 “ idols ? for ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath  
 “ said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be  
 “ their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come  
 “ out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,  
 “ and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you,  
 “ and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and  
 “ daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—This is now the ONLY  
 NATIONAL CHURCH,—the church composed of the “ holy nation  
 and peculiar people,”—“ the ISRAEL OF GOD.” This was what,  
 according to the prophets, *was to* succeed, and, according to  
 apostles, *did* succeed, the national church-state of the Jews.—  
 It is true, that there was always a distinction between the natural  
 and the spiritual Israel. But the spiritual Israel were the chil-  
 dren of a covenant which preceded, by four hundred and thirty  
 years, that which took the nation of Israel under the special  
 oversight of Jehovah, and constituted it his visible church. To  
 introduce this distinction, as if it were inconsistent with our  
 representation of the nation and the church of Israel as having  
 been identical in extent, is most uncandid ; inasmuch as they  
 who do so can hardly fail to be aware that by *the church*, in  
 this representation, we mean, not the true spiritual children of  
 Abraham, but that ecclesiastico-political community, consisting  
 of his posterity by Isaac, whom Jehovah took into special cove-  
 nant with himself at Sinai.

These things will be still more satisfactorily apparent, from  
 the manner in which both the royal and the sacerdotal order  
 among the Jews terminated ;—the latter in “ the Great High  
 Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,” and the former in  
 Him whom Jehovah has “ set as King upon his holy hill of  
 Zion.”—That the royal as well as the priestly office was thus  
 typical, and designed to terminate in the reign of Messiah,  
 as the other terminated in his sacrifice and intercession, it  
 appears scarcely reasonable to dispute.—The prediction of the  
 dying patriarch was,—“ The sceptre shall not depart from  
 Judah, until Shiloh come.” And why was it *then* to depart ?  
 The promise to David informs us. Jehovah engaged for the  
 perpetuity of his throne. It was to be “ established for ever  
 before him.” His royal seed was never to fail. Now, that it  
 was not David, and Solomon, and one or two more of the  
 good kings, that were personal types of Christ, but their

*office* that was at the same time typical of his, appears from this, that, through the entire succession, the throne continued to be, and continued to be called, "*the throne of David*;"—and to this throne the Messiah is represented as the last successor, destined to be its perpetual occupant. Thus the prophet,—Isa. ix. 6, 7. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." And what is the New Testament accomplishment of this? You find it in the intimation of the angelic messenger to the mother of our Lord,—Luke i. 30—33. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—I have no dispute at present with Millenarians. I take for granted, that the Messiah does now reign;—that his predicted kingdom commenced, when he "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Who, then, are the subjects of his kingdom? Nations? In one sense they are. He rules the world. He superintends the affairs of all peoples, tribes, and languages, in subserviency to the interests of his church. But his church itself is properly his kingdom. The members of the one are the subjects of the other. Mark his own words, on which we shall have occasion to comment more at large hereafter,—John xviii. 36, 37. "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

My object, in all that has just been said, is to show, that the national church of Israel was never intended to be followed

by other national churches, but by this kingdom of spiritual subjects, out of all nations, under the Headship of Christ:—that the Jewish constitution was entirely *sui generis*, instituted by Jehovah for special purposes, never by him intended to be, nor indeed capable of being, imitated:—that in the primary constitution of the Christian church there was an actual departure from it, and a complete change of system,—such a change as makes it manifest, if any thing can, that every attempt to set up the former as a pattern, or plead it as an example, is what I have called it, a presumptuous and preposterous return to that which is abolished, and an overthrowing, in its very spirit and principle, of the constitution of the kingdom of Christ, as originally delivered to his apostles by its Supreme and only Head.

It appears to me, that our brethren on the other side of this question fall into an egregious error, when they begin with general and abstract discussions about the duties of the civil magistrate. I shall advert to this subject in next lecture, when the directions of the New Testament with regard to these duties will come before us. What I wish you for the present to observe is, the difference between magistrates now, and magistrates under the Jewish theocracy. The kings of Judah were Jehovah's deputies. When the Israelites asked a king,—they asked a description of ruler whose rise had been anticipated, and whose character and qualifications had been described, by Moses. Their sin lay in wishing to have a king of a similar description to the kings of the countries round about them,—“that they also might be like all the nations, that their king might judge them, and go out before them, and fight their battles.” They did not like the previous plan of rule by judges and prophets, raised up, on the part of Jehovah himself, as he saw need,—a state of things in which his own authority, as the glorious self-constituted King of Israel, was more immediate, and more constantly apparent and felt. They sighed after something of more imposing worldliness, and, as they foolishly fancied, of more honourable independence. On this account, Jehovah represents them as, in their demand, “rejecting Him, that he should not reign over them.” But, notwithstanding their infatuation and guilt, He did not, when he so far complied with their desire as to give them a king, himself resign his peculiar rule. He retained his theocratic supremacy.—Now, under a government of this description, it must at once be apparent, every thing has a peculiarity that

can exist under no other. The peculiarity consists in the two-fold light which, in such circumstances, every action of the subject assumes. *Sins* and *crimes*, which, under ordinary governments, are by all writers on jurisprudence distinguished, come to be identified. Jehovah being at once their God and their King,—over them in the general relation of the moral Governor of the universe, and over them in the special and appropriate capacity of their national Head, rebellion was impiety, and idolatry was treason. It is idle, in such a case, to talk of imitation; or of a state of things so divinely peculiar being a pattern for other peoples.—There has hardly been a sentiment, indeed, in the range of mistakes into which professed Christians have fallen, which has proved more mischievous in its practical operation, than this description (if I may so term it) of *Judaizing*. Not only has the appeal been made to it in support of those Establishments, whose tendency has been so fatal to the purity of the church and its separation from the world; but all the systems of persecution for conscience-sake have sought in it their justification; it has supplied the apology for the extirpation of heretics,—for the punishment, by confiscation of goods, by imprisonment, and by death, of nonconformists to the dominant faith.—The good kings of Israel put idolaters to death. They did rightly. They executed in this the law of that Supreme Sovereign, whose throne, by his appointment, and in the character of his deputies, they occupied.—They entered into covenants with their people, for the suppression of all idolatry, and the judicial extermination of all who persisted in their adherence to it. They did rightly. It was the act not of piety merely, but of loyalty; inasmuch as contumacious idolaters not only sinned against Jehovah as their God, but rebelled against Jehovah as their King, and were traitors to the national government. Let us look to an example or two of such covenants. We have one in the reign of Asa—2 Chron. xv. 12—15. “And they entered into a covenant to seek the “Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all “their soul; that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of “Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether “man or woman. And they swore unto the Lord with a loud “voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn “with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; “and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest “round about.”—We have another, at the suggestion of Jehoi-



ada the priest, on the death of Athaliah and the accession of young Joash—2 Chron. xxiii. 16, 17. “And Jehoiada made  
 “a covenant between him, and between all the people, and  
 “between the king, that they should be the Lord’s people.  
 “Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it  
 “down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and  
 “slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.”—And we  
 have similar combinations of king and people, though not accompanied with precisely the same formalities of covenant engagement, in the days of the excellent Hezekiah—2 Chron. xxx. 13, 14. with chap. xxxi. 1.—“And there assembled at  
 “Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread  
 “in the second month, a very great congregation. And they  
 “arose, and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and  
 “all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into  
 “the brook Kidron.” “Now, when all this was finished, all Israel  
 “that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake  
 “the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw  
 “down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and  
 “Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had  
 “utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel  
 “returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.”  
 This was all right; in harmony, both as to spirit and letter, with the existing dispensation. But ah! what miserable work has arisen from the transference of what belonged exclusively to that singular constitution to cases essentially dissimilar!—to the cases of nations under no such divine superintendence, and of magistrates who were in no such sense the acting vicegerents of a divine superior!—cases in which there was no such identification of the civil and the sacred, of the supremacy of God’s dominion and the royal authority of the kingdom, of sins against God and crimes against the State.—By this confounding of the theocracy of Israel with ordinary governments,—of special with common,—of divine with human,—all classes of professing Christians have been, at different periods, more or less misled. They have, in their turns, with hardly an exception, fancied they were “doing God service,” by proscribing, anathematizing, and persecuting even unto death, such as dissented, under whatever plea of conscience, from the faith which at the time had the ascendancy, or, still more generally, from *their own* faith, whether dominant or not, according to the extent of power at the time in their possession. The laudable examples of the good princes of Judah has been urged, with



all the vehemence of zeal, by Christian ministers, upon Christian kings ; and the frowns of heaven, and the pouring out of the vials of divine wrath upon themselves and upon their subjects, have been denounced against them as the judicial punishment of their refusal. And in thus counselling, and thus denouncing, these ministers have flattered themselves that they were following a worthy and legitimate example :—they have felt, in delivering what they called their message from God, all the conscious authority, and stern prophetic majesty, of a commissioned Elijah.—It had been well, if these servants of the Prince of peace had borne in mind the reply of their Master to the two “ sons of thunder,” when they too were for imitating Elijah, and calling down the fires of Heaven upon his enemies : —“ He turned and rebuked them, and said unto them, Ye know “ not what manner of spirit ye are of ;—for the Son of man is “ not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

I must, for the present, have done. Several topics, which properly belong to the Old Testament part of the argument, remain untouched ; particularly the question respecting the compulsory or voluntary nature of the support of religion in Israel,—or rather the question, in what sense it was obligatory, and in what sense voluntary,—and the proper interpretation of certain prophetic intimations respecting the part that the kings of the earth should act towards the maintenance and advancement of the Messiah’s kingdom. But the Old and the New Testament arguments blend unavoidably with each other ; and the topics to which I have alluded will find a more suitable place under the discussion of the latter. Meantime, it is my earnest prayer, that, in conducting a scriptural argument, I may be kept from every feeling and from every expression that is out of harmony with a scriptural spirit.—And both now and hereafter, I shun those vain-glorious vauntings of victory, which have nothing but their magniloquence to recommend them, and which, mightily as they sound, are much more frequently the indication of felt weakness than of conscious strength.

## LECTURE IV.

### THE SCRIPTURE ARGUMENT CONTINUED.

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IN our former lecture, we reviewed a part of the argument, adduced in support of civil establishments of Christianity, or of a State-endowed church, from the Old Testament Scriptures. We considered the alleged manifestation of the inefficiency of the voluntary principle in the history of the antediluvian world;—the countenance conceived to be given to the union of Church and State, and to the support of the former by the latter, in the case of Melchisedec;—and the divine authority pleaded for such union and such support from the constitution of the Jewish church. In the extended discussion of the last of these subjects, we were, as a matter of course, led to the New Testament, as the only source from which we could derive any authoritative information as to the intention of God, respecting the continuance or the cessation of that constitution. We noticed the accordance of facts in the apostolic records with the previous intimations, given by the prophets, of a purposed change. There *was* such a change. The constitution of the church *did* cease to be national:—nor is the most distant intimation to be found, possessing the sanction of divine authority, of any future recurrence either to the principle or to the details of the ancient state of things; all that follows the point in the church's history to which the apostolic records conduct us, being nothing more than simple facts in providence, the accordance or disagreement of which with the mind of Christ can no otherwise be ascertained than by an appeal to those very records,—to the doctrine, precept, and example which they contain.—Your time will not at all admit of enlarged recapitu-

lation. To the observation just alluded to, that no divinely intimated sanction is given to any anticipated change, I must now add, that the only great change anticipated in the constitution of the church is accompanied, in the announcement of its future introduction, with the very reverse of sanction,—with the severest censure and commination. You will perceive to what I now refer—the rise, progress, and consummation of the antichristian system of “the man of sin.” I am quite aware, that every allusion to this topic has been and will be characterized as slanderous, and as a violation of all my promises that, “when reviled, I would not revile again;”—as applying to protestant and reformed churches what pertains to the papistical church of Rome. But our present question is, What saith the Scripture? That must not be censured as reviling, which goes not beyond the legitimate application of Bible principles, and which is dictated by the sober seriousness of a Bible spirit. We may be chargeable with “handling the word of God deceitfully,” when we withhold as well as when we pervert; when, under the influence of a false courtesy,—as unfaithful to our Master as it is unkind to our brethren,—we shun to declare any part of “the counsel of God.”—What, then, I would ask, was the primary *germ* of that mystery of iniquity, which progressively developed its hideous deformity under the domination of the Man of Sin and Son of perdition? Was not the *principle* of that heaven-devoted system the anomalous union of the temporal and the spiritual power,—the presumptuous usurpation and universal monopoly of the former by the latter? Where, then, are we to look for the origin of this principle? When was it introduced? When, but at the time when the union was projected by Constantine between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, between the banner of the cross and the sceptre of the Cesars? It was then that the embryo of the great apostasy was conceived. What more did the Roman pontiff, than avail himself of the combination of civil and sacred thus inauspiciously commenced, and, with an ambition and a capacity worthy of a better cause, carry out the principle of it to the full extent of its application? It is in the conduct of his Holiness, when he succeeded in uniting in his own person the ecclesiastical and civil supremacy of the world, avowing himself in both departments, the vicegerent of God upon earth, that we see the complete imitation of the case of Melchisedec;—an imitation, it is true, equally audacious and profane, but still boldly consistent with

the pattern.—I confess myself at a loss for the *principle* of that illicit connexion between the mystical Babylon and the kings of the earth, so severely condemned, and threatened with such judicial vengeance, in the book of Revelation, if we are not to understand it as consisting, essentially, in the alliance between the Church and the State. That the connexion is capable of subsisting in various degrees of profligacy, is at once admitted. That in the Romish church it has been carried to the highest pitch of grossness, and shamelessness, and guilt, no protestant denies,—and that there the divine denunciations are to find their fullest accomplishment. But is the *principle* of the forbidden intercourse confined in its operation to that communion? I will not attempt to show the amount of popery that is to be found in the Greek church, in the Lutheran church, and in the hierarchy, the principles, and the ritual observances, of our own English episcopacy. In our Scottish establishment, from the parity of her clergy and the comparative simplicity of her presbyterian constitution and ceremonial of worship, there is incomparably less of it than in the character of her southern sister. But in every Establishment there is the *principle*. The interdicted connexion subsists, wherever there subsists the unhallowed alliance between the Church and the State. There may be a gradual diminution from the highest point in the scale of delinquency to the lowest; from the throne of the Roman pontiff to the throne of the British monarch, who, when (in the person of the eighth Henry) he indignantly threw off the pope of Rome, became himself the pope of England,—and to the still lowlier throne of that monarch's representative in the councils of our northern church:—but in all, if I do not greatly misapprehend the sense of prophetic intimations, the *principle* is the same. If I am wrong in this, I shall be glad to acknowledge and retract the error, as soon as there shall be pointed out to me a more natural and fair interpretation of the essential principle of the reprobated connexion.

In proceeding to what remains of our extensive field, there is one thing that has been introduced into the argument on the opposite side, to which I wish in the first instance, though very briefly, to advert; because, while it may be regarded as holding the precedence in the order of the New Testament record, it holds, at the same time, were its relevancy at all admitted, a much more important precedence, a precedence of authority such as would decide the controversy with every consistent follower of Christ:—it is the *example of Christ himself*. For

the thirty-three years of his life on earth, he was a member of an Established church!—This has been said more than once or twice; and it was recently said, as I have been informed, in a public lecture in this city, by a friend and brother in the ministry of the Gospel, whose expressions of esteem on that occasion, I can, with all sincerity, reciprocate. And, while I speak with esteem of him, I would speak with affectionate reverence of that blessed Master whose example he thus pleaded. To that example we should all desire to look, with a closer scrutiny of every point of its perfect excellence, and with more devout aspiration after growing conformity to it both in spirit and in practice. I believe the friend to whom I have referred incapable of introducing such an allusion *ad captandum*,—for the purpose of inspiring the minds of his hearers with a horror against *the Voluntaries*, as if they were setting aside a part of their Saviour's example, and pretending to greater sanctity and separation from the world, than appeared in the sinless prototype of Christian obedience. But surely, to every intelligent hearer now present, it cannot fail to be apparent, that the case thus adduced, to throw the weight of the highest of all examples into the one side of the balance, is nothing more than a branch of the argument we have already had under review. The national Establishment of the Jews is, on all hands, admitted to have been divine. When Jesus appeared on earth, he was “made under the law.” The ancient economy was still in full authority. His subjection to it was a part of his “fulfilment of all righteousness.” On the same principle, he conformed to the existing festivals and rites of worship. The old system did not “vanish away,” till, when he had himself ascended on high, the new kingdom was established. The question with us should be—What is the example of Christ by which *we now* are to regulate our course? Because he conformed to the *divine* institution of the Jewish Establishment, does it follow that he would give the countenance of his example by conformity to the *human* institution (for who pretends that it is more?) of the British? How can we find a satisfactory answer to the question, otherwise than by looking at the constitution of his own kingdom, as settled on his accession to the throne, under the superintendence of his accredited vicegerents,—his own inspired apostles? It is thus alone that we can ascertain the system, to which, had he remained on earth, he would then have given the sanction of his conformity;—and it is thus alone that the point can be determined, whether, were



he now on earth, he would give it to any system of national Christianity—to any incorporation of his religion with the civil politics of this world.—Let not the attempt be made to turn aside the edge of this reply, by the reflexion, that were he on earth, he would find a mournful leaven of corruption in *every* system and in every existing communion. Who questions it?—and who does not lament it? O that the ministers and members of every Christian community would but set themselves to “purge out the old leaven,” that they may be a new and unleavened lump! O that He who “walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks” saw all the lights of his sanctuary burning with a purer and a more diffusive and influential lustre! But reflexions of this kind, on such occasions,—and they are incessantly to be heard,—are, to the perception of the very weakest intellect, nothing better than an evasion of the argument,—a retreat from its felt annoyance, under the imposing cover of a more than ordinary seriousness.

By this reference to the Redeemer’s example, I am naturally led to the notice of what he himself, even during the period of his subjection to the existing economy, taught his disciples, and in part his hearers generally, with regard to the kingdom he was about to set up.—I might here show you, how the whole style of his speech on this subject was calculated and intended to intimate *a change* from the state of things which had previously subsisted,—a change especially from the worldly to the spiritual, from the national to the select and separate. But not only would such general illustration occupy a great deal more time than can be spared for it,—I feel that I am specially called upon to vindicate, for myself and for my cause, one particular text, which almost every writer that has honoured me with any strictures on the discourse of which it was the motto, has attempted to wrest from both,—I mean the noted passage in John xviii. 36, 37. “My kingdom is not of this  
 “world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my  
 “servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews :  
 “but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore  
 “said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou  
 “sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for  
 “this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness  
 “unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my  
 “voice.”—I am far from questioning the sincerity of conviction with which so many successive writers have affirmed this passage to be *nothing to the purpose* in the present contro-

versy. But I am entitled to question the judiciousness of their comments and conclusions. One of them denies that the expression "*My kingdom is not of this world*" is designed to be descriptive of *character* at all. He alleges that it is a torturing of the text to make it mean any thing of the kind. "It gives no hint of any such thing," he says :—"it neither tells us where this kingdom is, nor in what world it exists.—Whether it is a kingdom of *matter* or of *mind*, temporary or permanent, or governed by civil or by sacred laws. It gives us information about none of these things : all it says is—*My kingdom is not of this world.*"\*—No child needs to be told, that this is all it *says* :—but the question is, What does it *mean* ? According to this writer, it is an expression not descriptive at all of nature or character, but simply of *locality* ; and even this is only in a negative form ;—"it is *not of this world* : " but of *what* world it is, the passage, it seems, gives no information. We are accustomed to think, that the alternative is between this world and the world from which the divine speaker had himself come down ; and that his saying "it is *not of this world*" is only a negative form of a positive affirmation, that it *is* what it is so frequently called, "*the kingdom of heaven.*" But alas ! if heaven be really meant, and there is at the same time, in the expression, no reference to character, but only to locality ;—the inevitable consequence must be, that Christ, if we are to believe his own declaration, was to have *no kingdom on earth* !—According to this commentator, all that is positive in the affirmation is, that, not being of this world, it was of some other world ;—but whether it was in Jupiter, or Mercury, or Venus, or Mars, or Saturn, or Herschel, Pilate (if he knew of such worlds) was left to conjecture.—But by the rest of the writers alluded to it is granted, that the terms *are* descriptive of character ;—that they do express the idea of spirituality and heavenliness. They say, Who questions the spiritual nature of the kingdom ?—all we contend for is, that it is not, by its spirituality, *unfitted* for a friendly alliance with the governments of this world, in order to the attainment of a common good.—And one of them puts it still more strongly, that the very difference between the two, since it does not amount to opposition such as would make their alliance incompatible, is the very circumstance that constitutes their fitness for such alliance.

\* Fleming's Critique—page 3.

Now, I freely concede to the writer last alluded to,\* that, when Jesus says "My kingdom is not of this world," he does not mean "the world" in the sense in which it is sometimes used, as distinguishing the *wicked* from the *people of God*. He does not mean to express the sentiment that it is *not wicked*, but only that it is *not secular*;—that it is sacred, as distinguished from civil or political,—that it is spiritual, as distinguished from earthly.—Mr Willis (of the Christian *spirit* of whose little work I cannot withhold my unqualified commendation, however inconclusive I may deem his reasonings)—Mr Willis conceives the expressions which are used by Christ respecting his disciples in various parts of the gospel according to John, when he represents them as "*not of the world*" to be in their import "perfectly similar." In this, I think he is mistaken:—and I wish to mark the mistake, because it is of importance for the illustration of my own views.—It seems to me evident, that, in such passages, being "of the world," signifies belonging to it in its *degenerate* and *corrupt* state, agreeably to the distinction in 1 John v. 19. "We know that we are of God, and that *the whole world* lieth in the wicked one."† In this view the disciples of our Lord were "not of the world," but "chosen out of the world;" John xv. 19.—and the true meaning of "the world" is clear from what is immediately added—"therefore the world hateth you." Now, observe, this is descriptive of character. It means their separation from the world, not properly, however, as secular, or civil, or political, but as sinful and vain, and practically wicked:—it means their being "not of the world" in the sense in which the world is "not of God." But in this sense, it must be evident, they are to have *no* connexion with it, *no* concurrence in its principles, *no* participation in its ways, *no* communion in its pleasures. It does not follow, Mr Willis alleges, from their being "not of the world," that they must have "no secular connexions with it—no property—no worldly endowments—no benefit from the laws of their country." But this writer, I am persuaded, will, on reflexion, be sensible, that his inference is drawn from one thing to another that is essentially different. That in the sense in which believers are affirmed not to be of the world, their incumbent duty is to

\* Rev. Mr Brown.

† Our translators say "in wickedness:" but it is evidently a repetition of the designation in the preceding verse—the Greek being the same—"that wicked one toucheth him not."

have *nothing to do* with the world, appears from many an express injunction:—Rom. xii. 2. “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”—1 John ii. 15, 16. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”—2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—Now, if this be the case in the one instance, ought not the same principle of interpretation to hold also in the other? In the sense in which Christ means to say that “his kingdom is not of this world,” should he not be understood as virtually inculcating that it should be *kept by itself*; that, being spiritual and not secular, it should keep aloof from all incorporation and alliance with the secular, lest its spiritual character should be thereby deteriorated, and its marked and prominent distinctness from the kingdoms of this world impaired? The reason in both cases is similar. As association with the world, in any of its vain and evil courses, is inconsistent with, and tends to relax and deaden, the holy and heavenly sensibilities of the new nature,—so would incorporation with the secular kingdoms of men, according to the spirit of the Saviour’s declaration, serve to secularize, by the admixture of the earthly and political, the “kingdom which is not of this world.” And such, universal experience attests, has been the invariable and melancholy result.

But, in all the discussions on this passage, the one point, that bears with special force on the present controversy, has, in my apprehension, been overlooked. Suppose we grant, that the design of our Lord in the words was to allay the jealous surmises of the Roman governor,—and to remove from his mind all fears of dangerous or troublesome interference with the imperial supremacy. Suppose we admit the following statement to be substantially correct:—“The crime charged was that of setting up as a rival to Cæsar,—a direct aspirant to the crown of at least one part of his dominions. He, the holy Jesus, guiltless of any such design, avows his right to be accounted a king; but explains, that his kingdom was of a

“very different nature from that of this world’s potentates, and  
 “was not at all of a kind to interfere with political authority,  
 “or to seek to supplant it in its own proper province, far less  
 “to wrest the crown by violence from the brow of any one who  
 “wore it. Had these been his views, instead of appearing  
 “before his judges with a few simple attendants, as defenceless  
 “as himself, he would have been found at the head of an army  
 “fighting his way to the ascendancy he sought to usurp.”\*—  
 Be it so. Still, as I have said, in all this, there is one consideration which appears to be unaccountably overlooked. Jesus was not only accused of making himself *a king*. His alleged designation was,—“*King of the Jews*.” Now, Pilate was well aware, that, of old, kings of the Jews had been kings of the same description as other kings,—not a few of them warlike, and distinguished for their prowess, and for the might of their arms, and the extent of their conquests. Whatever Pilate might think of the unintimidating circumstances of his appearance who stood before him, without the favour of priests, nobles, or people,—still he wished to know his pretensions. What were they? If he called himself “*King of the Jews*,” was he to be a king bearing any resemblance to former kings of that people? Was he to be such as they had been? Here lies, so far as this text is concerned, the turning point of the present controversy. It is found in the word now:—“*now* is my kingdom not from hence.” The question is, not whether Pilate fully comprehended the amount of meaning in Christ’s words; but what that meaning evidently was. The words involve a comparison between the past and the present; and they intimate a change,—a change from what had been to what was now to be. He had all along—in a way which *we* understand, though we have little ground to suppose that Pilate did—been *King of the Jews*. But in former times, his kingdom, in its form and constitution, had been national;—there was in it an incorporation of the civil and the sacred;—and it was maintained and defended by similar outward means as other kingdoms:—but now it was to be otherwise. The “*now*” is not a mere unemphatic and inferential particle; for indeed there is nothing of the nature of inference in the case. It announces a transition,—a transition from a comparatively secular and worldly state of his kingdom to a state essentially different. In this view, therefore, we have in the passage a distinct disavowal, from

\* Willis, pp. 8, 9.



the Redeemer's own lips, of the Old Testament constitution of his kingdom, as in any respect a model for the kingdom he was about to establish;—a declaration that its national and worldly state was now to terminate, and that, at this new era, it was to assume a new character,—embracing as its subjects those who were “of the truth,” *i. e.* who believed his doctrine and lived under its practical influence,—and maintaining its ground, and punishing its delinquents, and extending its conquests, by no power but the moral power of the same truth,—by no sword but “the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.”—If we are to take the criterion of a worldly kingdom as here given us by Christ himself,—“*If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,*”—the question will be settled, whether the alliance of that kingdom with the state was consistent with its spiritual and heavenly character:—for no sooner did the church of Christ become a state-incorporated church, than these words lost their distinctive meaning. His servants *did* fight. The sword was assumed, for the purposes of defence, and extension, and compulsory subjugation, and vindictive discipline.

With this and other intimations, on the part of our Lord, of change from the former state of things, and of the spirituality of his new reign, the entire narrative of the introduction and establishment of that reign is in perfect and beautiful harmony. This we have formerly seen, and resume not the illustration of it. The *facts* confirm our interpretation of the *principles*; the one being the clearest and most satisfactory of all commentaries on the other.—But to the conclusion we deduce from these plain intimations, and, if possible, still plainer facts, what is opposed by our friends on the other side of this great question? What is there remaining, when we set aside the plea that is derived from the ancient Jewish constitution? What is there in the Old Testament having reference to New Testament times? and what is there in the New Testament itself?—Let us briefly reply to each of these questions.

From the Old Testament we have a selection of prophetic intimations respecting the part which the kings of the earth would act, and ought to act, in reference to the King of Zion and his kingdom.—I introduce a brief notice of these prophecies here,—I mean at this point of my argument, on the principle that “no prophecy of the scripture is of self-interpretation.” Prophecies that are obviously of general import, and consequently susceptible of modifications of meaning, must be

interpreted in harmony with subsequent facts. If the nature and constitution of the New Testament kingdom are clearly ascertained from the principles and historical statements of the New Testament record, the predictions in question must be understood in a sense that is not at variance with these statements and principles. It would be a most preposterous procedure, to take our views of the church of Christ from any merely general and comparatively obscure intimations of prophecy:—how much more reasonable to take our key for the interpretation of such prophecies from the inspired New Testament accounts of the church of Christ! I might illustrate the remark from a closely analogous case. There are predictions respecting the *worship* of New Testament times, that are expressed in terms borrowed from the external ceremonial worship of the old covenant:—but, from the cessation of that covenant and its worship, we know that such predictions are to be interpreted on principles consistent with the more spiritual and simple service of the New Economy. So it is with the other class of prophecies of which I now speak.

It would be insufferable in me to tax your patience, by a repetition of what has been already said on these portions of prophetic scripture. The two principal of them are in the second psalm, and in the 49th chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah. In the former, the spirit and sum of the argument is, that the kings who, in the beginning of the psalm, are described as opposing Jehovah, are in the close of it commanded to serve him; and that, the opposition having been made in their *official* capacity, in the same capacity must the service be rendered:—in the latter, kings and their queens are represented, in promissory prediction, as affording their guardian and nutritive influence to the church of God,—as “nursing fathers and nursing mothers.”—Allow me, on these and similar passages, two or three general remarks:—

1. Suppose we should grant that the rulers of the kingdoms of this world are here spoken *to* and spoken *of* in their official character,—it will not surely be denied, that there is a previous and primary reference to them *personally*. Are they not, in the former passage, called, in the first instance, to personal faith in Christ and personal subjection to him?—“to do homage” (as Mr Scott expresses it) “to Christ as their superior” “Lord, from whom they have their authority; to adore him as their God; and to welcome him as their Saviour by the kiss of reverence, submission, love, and adoration?” It was not

as kings merely, but as sinners, they were in danger of perishing; and it was not as kings merely, but as sinners, that they are admonished to “kiss the Son,” that they might escape “his wrath.” If, then, it be as kings, in their official capacity, that they are enjoined to “serve the Lord,” it is as converted, penitent, believing kings. They must be personally in a state of spiritual subjection to Christ, before they can, in any capacity, acceptably serve him.—And in the other passage, the same thing is manifest. The kings and queens spoken of are converted princes, that become, from humble and affectionate attachment to the church and to the church’s Head, its protectors, and the conscientious, tender, and zealous promoters of its interests;—“rendering the most profound respect for the church, and its faithful, consistent, pastors and rulers; not attempting to have dominion over her faith, but promoting by all proper means her comfort and prosperity, and showing her honour for the Lord’s sake, proportioned to the contempt and indignity with which she has been treated.”\*—Are we really, then, to regard predictions which tell us of the conversion of kings, and of their subjugation, in willing and lowly homage, to the King of Zion, and the consequent employment of all their legitimate influence for the advancement of his cause,—are we to regard such predictions as having, in any respect or in any degree, received their accomplishment by means of those civil Establishments of Christianity, by which the monarchs of this world have sought the gratification of their own ambition incomparably more than the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ,—and under which hereditary princes, of whatever character, how ungodly and how profligate soever, are held “*religious*” by courtesy, and *Christian* by a fiction of law? “defenders of the faith” which they neither believe nor know, and “heads of the church on earth,” while they are “aliens” from the church both on earth and in heaven!

But 2. When we speak of kings acting in their official capacity, we mean that they act *with authority*;—and when we speak of their acting with authority, we mean that their enactments are accompanied with statutes of compulsion to insure obedience, and with statutes of penalty to correct transgression. Now, we do most distinctly deny, that any king on earth is entitled, on any ground of right recognised in the

\* Scott’s Comment. on the passage.

word of God, to introduce any such authority, any such compulsion, any such penalty, for enforcing obedience to any of the laws of Christ's kingdom, or for avenging the infraction of them on the part of the subjects of that kingdom.—That kingdom is an independent kingdom,—having a king of its own, subjects of its own, laws of its own, obligations of its own, penalties of its own. These penalties are all of a piece with the spiritual nature of the kingdom; the highest of them consisting in a sentence of exclusion from the communion of the faithful, by which the offender is solemnly declared, till he gives evidence of true repentance, to have acted as the subject of a different kingdom,—the kingdom of the “prince of this world.”—I am quite aware that obedience to their civil rulers is enjoined by the King of Zion upon all his subjects. But this determines nothing as to the nature and extent of the power of those rulers. It proceeds on the principle, that civil government is an “ordinance of God” for the good of human society:—but it no more proves that civil rulers have any rightful power in what regards the religion of their subjects, than the command to Christian servants to be obedient to their earthly masters proves those masters to have a religious as well as a civil authority over their servants.

3. They who would found the magistrate's power in religion on such passages as these, must be sensible that there is in them a most extraordinary *indefiniteness*. They are so very vague and general, that, in settling the duties of those to whom they relate, it is *impossible to make any use of them*. Were there other parts of the word of God, where these duties were more explicitly pointed out, their nature explained, and their boundaries defined, the case would be different. We should then have in the one a key to the other. But when we merely read of kings and judges of the earth “serving Jehovah,”—and of their being “nursing fathers and nursing mothers” to the church, and this too in a connexion which, so far from involving a claim of authority or dominion, represents them as “bowing down before her with their faces to the earth, and “licking up the dust of her feet,” Isa. xlix. 23.—we are left in utter perplexity as to the place which civil rulers are to hold in relation to the church;—what they are to be, what they are to do, and how they are to do it.—The expressions in the New Testament, in which the kings of the earth are brought at all into connexion with the church, are of the same undefined description,—more so, if possible, than even the

other. What is there to be made, in forming definite conceptions on a subject like this, of such a phrase as "the earth helping the woman?"—or of "the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour" into the heavenly city? What is there in such passages that is at all tangible, or reducible to any thing like simple principles of action? Yet these, and such as these, are the texts to which we are gravely and formally referred for the foundation of the system of civil Establishments of Christianity, and for the sanction of the magistrate's power in matters of religion! It certainly does not say much for the validity of a system, when its supporters, instead of directing us, for the ground on which it rests, to the plain and explicit principles, and precepts, and facts of the New Testament, have recourse to the purposely obscure terms of unfulfilled prophecy,—terms from which the system could never be extracted, but which they ingeniously interpret in harmony with the system,—ingeniously, and I believe in many cases sincerely, though under the influence of a strangely deluding prepossession.—If, again, our brethren go back for any thing definite as to the powers of civil rulers in the concerns of religion, to the ancient Jewish economy,—we have already, I trust, wrested that weapon from their hands; having shown that, not even in the principle of it, and far less in its definite details, is it either lawful or possible to make that economy a pattern for the New Testament kingdom.

4. Really converted and godly magistrates may be incomparably more efficient in promoting throughout their dominions the prevalence of true religion and its great practical ends, by the influence of their personal example, and by a variety of legitimate means to which their exalted station gives them access, than by anything whatsoever of the nature of civil enactment. What are the religious laws of an irreligious ruler?—the anti-blasphemous statutes of a blasphemer?—a Sabbath-breaker's prohibitions of the breach of the Sabbath?—an unbeliever's proclamations in support of the faith?—They go for nothing, and for worse than nothing. They engender only scorn; and any obedience that is rendered to them is the obedience not of principle but of selfish fear. A royal subject of divine grace,—a genuine fearer of God,—living under the power of godliness, might prove a true "nursing father" to the church, without the enactment of a single compulsory statute, or the interposition, even in one instance, of his magisterial authority, in its proper concerns. It was the example of David, far more than his



official enforcement of Mosaic precepts, that effected the diffusion amongst his subjects of the spirit of religion. I am firmly persuaded, that the amount which, in preparation for the erection of the temple, he contributed "*of his own proper good*," operated with an influence of sympathetic excitement inexpressibly more powerful, than the far larger contribution bestowed from the public revenue.—Assuredly, when the prophecies speak of the rulers of this world acceding to the dominion of the Son of God, and bowing to his sceptre, the predictions should be understood according to the nature of his reign. They must mean true spiritual subjection. But a royal convert, duly enlightened as to the nature of the reign to which he submits, will be sensible that, in the kingdom of which he becomes a subject, he cannot be a legislator. He will shrink from every thing of the kind, as an audacious interference with a foreign and superior jurisdiction,—as an act of more unseemly presumption, than it would be for one of his own subjects to take it upon him to enact and publish laws for his own realm.

5. In the work of Dr Inglis, there is a correspondence traced between the opposition which, in the former part of the second Psalm, the rulers of this world are described as making to the Lord and his Christ, and the subjection and service to which they are summoned in the close of it,—a correspondence, I say, between these and the facts of the early history of the gospel; the opposition actually made to the cause of the Lord by the imperial and other secular powers for three centuries, and the service which was then rendered to it by Constantine, in the taking of Christianity under the protection and patronage of the State:—and from this he wishes, yet hardly ventures, to deduce the conclusion, that the latter class of facts were in gracious fulfilment of the latter part of the psalm,—and, being thus a verification of promise, may be regarded as having the prophetic sanction of divine authority.—It is unnecessary to expose the extreme slenderness of such ground. The adoption of it only shows how minds even of no ordinary power, when they can find little that is substantial on which to build, are fain to satisfy themselves with what is ingenious. The fault is not theirs that they cannot find more solid ground:—how can that be found which does not exist? I speak of the argument, not of its author:—God forbid that I should indulge a light or disrespectful thought of the dead!—We must still insist upon it, as in our former lecture, that the act of Constantine can be estimated by no criterion but that of the New Testament

record. But we may now say, in addition to this, that, according to the view of the psalm and its fulfilment first referred to, the establishment of Christianity by Constantine must have been pre-eminently a *benefit* to the church of God. Was it then so? In answering this question, I may take the opportunity of observing that I have been myself greatly misrepresented. I have been charged with either a grossly ignorant or a perversely wilful falsification of the facts of history. The charge rests on the allegation that, according to my statements, there was little or no corruption in the Christian church before the days of Constantine, and that all corruption had its commencement then. But I have said no such thing; I have said the very contrary. My recorded words are,—“I am far from meaning to say, that “there was no corruption in the church till such establishments came to be introduced. That would be a very different “proposition,—a proposition at variance with the plainest intimations both of early history and of the New Testament itself. “There *was* corruption, and no inconsiderable portion of it in “some of the apostolic churches themselves.”\* When afterwards, in speaking of the time of Constantine, I represent it as “the point of terminating advancement and commencing retrogression,”—as “the precise boundary at which the flowing “tide began to recede,”†—a candid critic would have limited the import of my words by the previous qualifying admission, and would have interpreted them as meaning, what they were intended to express, a sudden and prodigious *increase* of corruption, and the introduction of a flood of evils of *new and unprecedented kinds*,—along with a sadly accelerated declension of all that was spiritual,—a neap-tide of the church’s true and essential glory.—Have I, on this subject, employed stronger language than others? Allow me, for a few moments, to place mine beside that of churchmen themselves, when, in freedom from any spirit of controversy, they are recording the facts of history, or expounding the predictions of the sacred volume. I might multiply quotations to my purpose, from Mosheim, Campbell, Faber, Fuller, Kett, Haweis, Jones, and even Milner himself; but your time forbids. I shall present you with two specimens,—which, strong as they are, are not stronger than some others. The first is from Archdeacon Woodhouse, in his work on the Apocalypse, and is adopted by Mr Cuninghame, himself at the time a churchman, in his Dissertation on the

\* Sermon on Establishments, p. 33. octavo ed.

† Ibid. p. 42.

seals and trumpets of the same book.\*—The writer is opposing those interpreters who explain the vision, in the seventh chapter of the book of the Revelation, “as a description of the state of the church in the time of Constantine:”—“Now, the history “of this period,” says he, “fairly related, informs us, that, “although the Christian church was delivered from persecution, “and advanced in worldly consideration and power, yet did it “acquire no *real* accession of worth, dignity, or exaltation, “by its connexion with the imperial throne. Nay, from that “very time its degeneracy and corruption are most indubitably “to be dated. From that period worldly power and riches “became the objects of its leaders, not purity and virtue. Many “entered the Christian church, and obtained its honours and “dignities, by base dissimulation of their principles, to please “the emperor, and recommend themselves to his favour; and “the consequent extension of the Christian religion among the “heathen nations was, as Mosheim observes, *in name, not in reality*. The worldly professors of Christianity in this century were so far from fulfilling the prophecy by washing their “robes in white, and by being *fed and conducted by the Lamb*, “that they appear rather to have assumed the hue of *another leader, the fire-coloured dragon*, and to have greedily sought “from him those worldly riches and that power, which their “Lord had refused at his hands.”—My second citation is from a more recent, and a justly popular expounder of prophecy: it is from Keith’s Signs of the Times. In commenting on Dan. xi. 34, he says: “The elevation of Constantine to the throne, “and his conversion to Christianity, gave outward peace to the “church. In human view the help seemed great. But, as “many had formerly become genuine converts, on witnessing “the integrity of saints, conjoined with the intrepidity of martyrs, the religion of the court became then the lure to a formal and false profession of a holy faith. The cause of Truth “received but a *little help*; and ‘*many did cleave unto them with flatteries*.’ Eusebius, in his life of Constantine, relates, “that the emperor’s kindness was wont to be imposed upon by “the unspeakable dissimulation of those who craftily crept into “the church, and falsely assumed the name of Christians!”—Then, on verse 35. of the same chapter, after detailing the persecutions of the kingdom or church of Christ in early times, he says: “*In the days of these kingdoms*,” of which the Roman

\* Dissertation, &c. pp. 46—48. Ed. 1813. The Italics, in these quotations, are not mine.

was the last, “did the God of heaven set up a kingdom; and  
 “such was the reception given to it by the rulers and nations  
 “of the world. But, after a long time of fiery trial, and still  
 “without any change in the form of the government of Rome,  
 “they who had been afflicted long were ‘*holpen with a little*  
 “*help* ;’ and hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness began to be  
 “associated with the profession of the gospel,—‘*Many clave*  
 “*to them with flatteries*,’ when a smile from a throne, in lieu  
 “of the prospect of a cross, awaited the convert to the Chris-  
 “tian faith. But *little*, in a spiritual sense, was the help,  
 “which the conversion of the emperor of Rome conferred on  
 “the cause of the cross. The truth was not greatly aided by  
 “nominal converts, or by worldly men. The spirit of the  
 “world was gradually infused into the church, which became  
 “corrupted by prosperity, as previously it had been purified  
 “by tribulation. The hierarchy gradually arose, and attained  
 “a domineering ascendancy, as if the kingdom of Christ had  
 “been a kingdom of this world, dependent for its stability on  
 “human power. They who held the offices of those who be-  
 “fore had ‘instructed many,’ became lords over the consciences  
 “of men, and held God’s heritage as their own. They who  
 “ought to have been known of all men, as the disciples of  
 “Jesus, by their mutual love, vented their unholy zeal in fierce  
 “animosity and violence; and the reputed guardians of the  
 “gospel of peace, copying the example of blind idolaters, strove  
 “to maintain the interests of the church by the very means  
 “which had been tried in vain to effect the subversion of the  
 “gospel. Persecution for conscience’ sake revived in another  
 “form;—that of papal ultimately succeeded to that of pagan :  
 “—and churchmen inflicted against ‘men of understanding’  
 “the injuries and cruelties which martyrs, in the earlier history  
 “of the church, had suffered at the hand of heathens.”\*—This  
 is a candid representation of the truth; and nothing stronger,  
 certainly, could I wish in my support.

And was this, then, the accomplishment of one of God’s  
 gracious promises to his church?—the fulfilment of a predic-  
 tion of blessing?—a change, in which the subjects of the  
 Redeemer’s kingdom had reason to boast themselves?—It is  
 no difficult matter, by portraying, in the darkest shades they  
 will bear, the church’s previous corruptions, and throwing  
 upon them as little as possible of the relieving lights of her

\* Keith’s Signs of the Times, vol. i. pp. 77, 78, and pp. 80, 81.



still celestial glory, to delude inconsiderate minds into the impression that any remarkable aggravation of error, and disorder, and defection was hardly to be imagined;—but it will not do;—the consequences which have thus been described appear as dismal facts on the faithful page of history; and they are no more, either in kind or in degree, than any ordinary sagacity might have anticipated. I may confidently appeal to the decision of every ingenuous mind, whether this period of the church's worldly elevation was not the period of her spiritual downfall;—whether, when the light of earthly splendour shone upon her, the light of heavenly purity was not proportionally withdrawn; whether, as she gained the honour that cometh from men, she did not lose that which cometh from God only; whether, if indeed she gloried in her acquisitions, she was not, in the estimate of the whole spiritual world, glorying in her shame; and whether, over such a scene, I have gone beyond the truth in pronouncing ICHABOD the appropriate inscription.

From all that has been said, you may be left to judge of the candour of those who allege, that we have no more on which to rest our argument in the New Testament than its *silence*. Nothing can be more untrue. We have said, and we repeat it, that on its silence we *might* rest, “*were* there nothing further to support us;”—that is, on the absence of every thing, in principle, precept, or fact, on which the advocates of Establishments can place their cause. When there *is* such silence, we may surely, without presumption, say to them, with regard to an innovation of so great magnitude and extensive influence,—“Who hath required this at your hands?” We might well have put the question to the imperial head of Rome, when he ventured to legislate for the Divine Head of the church,—“By what authority doest thou these things? and “who gave thee this authority?”—There are occasions, too, when silence is more than ordinarily conclusive, as an interdict on human interference. The present is one of these. We have seen the previous state of things, under the old economy:—we have seen the prophetic intimations of a coming change:—we have seen the actual change at the fulness of time, in correspondence with these intimations:—we have seen the cessation of the nationality of the church,—and the distinctness of the kingdom of Christ from the communities of this world, and the simplicity and spirituality of its constitution and laws. Now



we deny, in the strongest terms, that this *is* mere silence. It is silence, indeed, on the one side—dead silence—but it is not silence on the other. It is a case, in which *facts* involve *principles*. How can we regard the actual procedure of the apostles of Christ, in constituting the New Testament church, in any other light than as the *acting out of principles*? And who will venture to say that *human discretion* is at liberty to innovate upon the institutions of *divine wisdom*? Who and where are the authorities, whether ecclesiastical or civil, that are warranted to alter the laws of Heaven, and to substitute their own devices for the enactments of the King of Zion?

We lay it down as a fundamental maxim, that all legislation in the kingdom of Christ is *ultra vires*—beyond the province and the rights—of any authority that has ever existed, in the church or out of it, since the days of the apostles. “They, “being dead, yet speak.” Their recorded authority is in their writings; and it is the authority of Christ and of God. The sole question ought to be,—What are the principles and laws of the constitution of the kingdom, *as settled by them*? There may be diversity of opinion as to the manner in which, within the church, these principles and laws are to be carried into practical operation. But this does not affect the present question. That question is, whether the remotest hint is to be found, of any power lodged, or commanded or permitted to be lodged, in the hands of the civil rulers of this world, in reference to the affairs of the kingdom of Christ? Let it be pointed out; and we shall bow to it. But, with the New Testament before us, we cannot but regard the language put into the lips of the monarch of these realms, in his speech from the throne at the opening of the present parliament, (and which accords with what has been said at other times on similar occasions,) as involving a presumptuous violation of the prerogatives of a higher Sovereign. What Christian, whose mind has not been drawn away from the simplicity of the apostolic statements, and nurtured in the school of political Christianity, can fail to be sensible, that the king of England is out of his province, when he announces the intended proposal of measures “to improve,” not merely “our civil “jurisprudence,”—that were right,—but “the administration “of justice in ecclesiastical causes;” and “to make provision “for the more effectual maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline;”—and the appointment of commissions, for considering, amongst other matters, “the more equal distribution

“ of Episcopal duties,”—(not *revenues* merely, but *duties*,—though indeed there is sufficient propriety in the two going together.)—and “ the best mode,” in different specified respects, “ of providing for the cure of souls.”

I am not unaware that such language has immediate reference to the English Episcopacy, of which the king is acknowledged the supreme head on earth ; and that by our Scottish Presbyterian Establishment this Christ-dishonouring title is jealously disowned. But the refusal of a title is one thing ; the denial of power another. Let any one read those parts of the Scottish standards, which relate to the powers of the civil magistrate in regard to the affairs of the church ; and then say, what authority more plenary could well be ascribed to him, were he acknowledged its earthly head. I cannot at present dwell upon this topic, having expressed my views of it on another occasion.\* I would only observe, that the ordinary distinction of *circa sacra* and *in sacris* can be of little avail ; for if the terms there employed do not express a power *in sacris*, I despair of understanding any language that can possibly be used on the subject. It is time, however, that his Majesty were looking after his prerogatives. They seem to be in danger of infringement in more assemblies than one. The editors of the Church of Scotland Magazine have adopted and sanctioned the views of the justly eminent metropolitan professor of divinity, according to which the king, as represented by his Grace the commissioner in the General Assembly, is denied to have any power in that court whatever, either *circa sacra* or *in sacris*, and pronounced to have no status there but that of a *looker-on* ; and they have challenged me to produce a single instance “ in which the Assembly have permitted the commissioner to be *more than a looker-on*.”—I was once, many years ago, in the General Assembly. I was there, of course, as a *looker-on*. I had little conception at the time, that I, and that each spectator in the gallery, had the same authority there as his Majesty’s representative. I had, in my simplicity, imagined, never allowing myself to fancy that the standards of the church were a dead letter,—that his Grace was there, as the royal deputy, to “ take order that unity and peace be preserved in the “ church ;” to see that “ the truth of God be kept pure and “ entire ;” to “ prevent or reform corruptions and abuses in

\* Speech published in the Report of the proceedings of the Edinburgh Voluntary Church Society, at their last annual meeting.

“ worship and discipline ;” and “ to provide that whatsoever “ was transacted was according to the mind of God.”—Are we now, then, to understand all this, and more to the same purpose, as the language of mere adulatory courtesy?—and is his Grace, and is his Majesty whom his Grace represents, to be regarded as a mere cypher, of which it is one of the distinctive properties, that precedence nullifies its power?—I ask, in serious earnest, What, according to this modern license of interpretation, are we to make of the doctrine of the Confession respecting the magistrate’s power in matters of religion? Are not our brethren getting before their creed? I rejoice to believe that they are. There is a manifest shrinking from its statements, as not only too antiquated for the times, but containing more of the spirit and letter of the Old Testament theocracy, than even they are prepared to approve. If I am wrong in this—and I shall be sorry if I prove to be so—let us see a manful and straight-forward defence of these statements, on any principles of explanation that are not chargeable with explaining them away.

What is the general command of the Master we serve, respecting civil and sacred things? We read it in these words —“ Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”—This evidently implies a distinction between the one class of things and the other:—and “ if this distinction,” (to use the appropriate words of Mr Spence) “ consists not in Cæsar being, under God, supreme “ head in civil things, and in God being the only Head in “ sacred things, it is high time that the world were favoured “ with a perspicuous and succinct detail of ‘ the things which “ are Cæsar’s,’ in contradistinction to those that are God’s, that “ tender consciences might be at rest, and know how far they “ ought to obey Cæsar’s ordinances in things sacred, as well as “ in things civil.”—Let it be recollected, that the words were originally addressed to Jews. These Jews were under the obligations of their own law. Had their rendering the tribute to Cæsar been, in any way, incompatible with their rendering to God obedience in all that his precepts required of them, they could not have been either enjoined or permitted to do it. God, in his providence, had allowed them to come under the Roman yoke; and what was exacted of them by those who had the mastery, it was pronounced by the authority of Jesus no infraction of their allegiance to Him that they should pay. —Under their own theocratic government, however, there was,

properly speaking, no distinction between the things which were Cæsar's and the things which were God's. God and Cæsar were one. What belonged to the one belonged to the other.—But when the words are applied to Christians, the case is different. We are under no theocracy. There is no such identity now in the object to whom we render our civil and our religious service. While the distinction, therefore, remains between the two descriptions of duties, the one must be regarded as appropriate to Cæsar, and the other as appropriate to God. There *is* a distinction, which, generally speaking, is sufficiently plain between things civil and things sacred,—between the duties of the first and the duties of the second table of the law. If, in some points, it is felt a matter of difficulty to draw with precision the line of demarcation between them, it may be worthy of consideration, how far, in such cases, the difficulty may not, wholly or in part, be occasioned by the very habits of thought which have been induced by their unnatural intermixture. The very designation of a *civil magistrate* ought to be understood as limiting his authority to the civil department. When he comes upon religious ground, he steps beyond his province. All that is properly religious lies between God and the conscience. No human authority is entitled to interfere with it. If, while we are, conscientiously and cheerfully, “rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,” Cæsar should overstep the limit of his divine commission, and demand of us, in one jot or tittle, the “things that are God's,” the question comes then to be, Is God or Cæsar to be obeyed? In such a case, disobeying Cæsar is not disobeying the God who has enjoined submission to Cæsar; because, in going beyond his legitimate boundary, Cæsar himself is the transgressor;—he has interfered with what does not belong to him;—he has presumptuously intruded into the province of the King of kings:—and, if *he* transgresses in commanding, it does not follow that *we* must sanction and participate in his transgression, by obeying.

That “righteousness exalteth a nation;”—that the more extensive in a country the prevalence of scriptural godliness, with its practical moral effects, the more truly great, prosperous, and happy will that country be;—are propositions which no Christian, which no theist will question. I have ever inculcated the doctrine, that he is the truest patriot who contributes most efficiently to the diffusion of the knowledge and influence of pure religion.—To say, therefore, that the civil magistrate *has*



*nothing to do with it*, is to speak rashly,—is to say what cannot be admitted without explanatory qualification. He *has* to do with it. Every man has to do with it that desires the nation's weal; and, since the magistrate, more than all others, ought to have this object at heart, he has more to do with it than any man in his dominions. It is the first duty of every magistrate, as it is of every other man, to *be* religious; and a truly religious magistrate, will exert himself to the utmost, by the openness and decidedness of his example, and by every legitimate means in his power, to make his people religious. Would to God that our country, and every country called Christian, were blessed with such rulers!—All this, however, is true, independently of *official power*. The proper authority of a civil ruler includes legislation, compulsion, penalty. But, in matters of religion, we affirm these to be altogether out of the question; and such matters, therefore, to be beyond the limits of his official province.—To *legislate* in regard to religion, to institute rites and ceremonies for the church, to frame ecclesiastical constitutions by acts of parliament, and by similar acts to alter and modify these constitutions at pleasure, is an assumption of power even higher than belonged to those kings of Israel whose jurisdiction is so commonly pleaded as the divine archetype for that of other monarchs. With them there was no legislative authority; the institutes of both civil and ecclesiastical polity were all fixed. Not a jot or tittle could they change. They were a simple *executive*. And how is it now? The constitution and laws of the kingdom of Christ are to be found in the only statute-book of that kingdom. There is no existing power of legislation; and as for the executive, it is not to be found in any civil functionaries, but forms a part of the divinely ordered constitution of the church itself. The magistrate can never, by any right of his, take out of the hands of the officers and subjects of Christ's kingdom what has been lodged with them by the only Lord whom, in this capacity, they acknowledge.—And, even if this were not decisive,—even if he could be proved to have the authority pleaded for,—it would still be a question,—a question of natural reason, and a question of fact and experience, whether the establishment and endowment of Christianity were really the most eligible means for effecting the promotion and prevalence of “pure and undefiled religion.” The evidence of the contrary belongs not to my department; and, if it did, I should abstain from touching it, after the condensed, but not



less luminous than forcible exhibition of their injurious tendencies laid before you in last lecture.

On the proofs adduced from the New Testament, that religion comes within the province of civil rulers, it will not be needful for us to dwell. They are of such a nature as fully to warrant, in replying to them, the adoption of the maxim—*Verbum sat*.\*

It is the duty of every man, we are first reminded, in every sphere he is called to fill, to act from religious principle, and to “do all to the glory of God;” and from this obligation the magistrate surely,—the Christian magistrate—is not to be considered as exempted.—Unquestionably not. It is, beyond controversy, incumbent on every Christian magistraté,—and if he be indeed a Christian, he will not require to have the duty urged upon him, for he will ever be led to it by the felt responsibilities of his charge, and by a sense of his dependence on the divine favour and the divine aid,—that in “transacting “the national affairs,” he “acknowledge the authority and seek “the blessing of God,—and of God in Christ.”—“If our “opponents concede this,” adds Mr Brown, “they concede as “real a union of Church and State as can possibly exist.”† Indeed! Then I trust you will all go along with me in the fervent prayer, that the union of Church and State were universal!—for it were then only a prayer that we might have truly Christian men for our rulers, and that the whole civil administration of our country were conducted under the guidance of truly Christian principle. But the obvious question is—Does this supposition alter the nature or the ends of the administration itself? Is it not, whether under the management of religious or of irreligious men, *civil* administration still? Does the principle from which an act is done, change the department to which the act belongs,—converting civil into ecclesiastical, and ecclesiastical into civil, according as the motives happen to be religious or political? Christian servants are represented as “serving the Lord Christ;” and, “whatsoever they do, they are commanded to “do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Does this alter the nature of the servile relation? Does that relation cease to be a civil relation, when the duties required in it are performed from Christian motives?—I appeal to you, my hearers, whether this be not egregious trifling. And yet the author of this argument, though by no means destitute of acuteness, triumphs in it, as if it settled the

\* A word will do. † Church Establishments Defended, page 6.

controversy:—"Produce us a text of the New Testament, say "our opponents, for the union of Church and State. We "answer, that the whole Scriptures together, not only permit, "but demand it. They demand it by enjoining, that Christian "men, in whatever sphere they are called to move—in private "and in public, in the Church and in the State, shall seek to "carry the authority and the blessing of their Master along "with them, and, in his name, conduct their whole proceed- "ings."\*—I have already gone beyond my *Verbum sat*. I leave you to answer the question, whether such ground as this would have been taken, if better had been to be had?

We are reminded further, that in Rom. xiii. the civil magistrate is described as "the minister of God *for good*;" and as "a terror, not to good works, but to *the evil*." And from these expressions, because they are unqualified, the lesson is deduced, that *every kind* of good comes within the province of his official "ministry,"—and that the same divinely-committed ministry binds him to prosecute and to punish *every kind* of evil.—It might, perhaps, be enough, in reply to this, to say, that the ministers of Christ in his spiritual kingdom are surely ministers *for good*. Does it follow that *they* are entitled to interfere in *civil* concerns? No more does it follow from such an expression, that civil rulers are entitled to interfere in *religious* concerns. If I am told that the province of the spiritual minister is defined; equally so, I answer, is that of the civil. If the one is not an officer of State, neither has the other any official status in the church.—But I cannot allow a conclusion so important and so perilous to pass without a little further notice.—"Let any man read these accounts,"† it has been said, "with attention, and with a common share of intelligence and candour, and say, whether it is not the proper "end of the magistrate's office, to confer on society every kind "and measure of good which he may be able to confer in the "use of means placed in his hands; and to repress every sort "of crime, or overt act of wickedness injurious to society, "which, in the use of the means placed in his hands, he may "be able to repress. The expressions are quite indefinite; "neither specifying any particular kind of good on the one "hand, nor of evil on the other; and nothing but express "authority from other parts of Scripture can justify us in giv-

\* Church Establishments Defended, p. 6.

† The accounts given in the New Testament of the "direct ends of magistracy." Brown's Church Establishments Defended, p. 70.

“ing them a limited sense. So far, however, from finding this, we have at least *the presumption* arising from the example of the Jewish rulers, to confirm the natural interpretation of the words. I really do not see how it is possible to get rid of these passages, without adopting a mode of interpretation altogether violent and arbitrary.”

As to the reference here made to the Jewish rulers, I have formerly said enough to expose the irrelevancy of that example, and to show you, that, instead of its affording a *presumption* in favour of the course pleaded for, such an application of it involves *presumption* of a very different kind.—But distant may the time be, when the civil rulers of these realms shall lend an ear to such ill-omened doctrines as these! For an exemplification of the kinds of evil, the coercive repression of which comes within the magistrate’s province, in his capacity of “a terror to evil-doers,”—“as directly within his province as theft or murder”—we are referred to the case of *blasphemy*. But what is blasphemy? I regard the denial and ridicule of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ as blasphemy. Is it, then, to be denounced by the law?—and are we to prosecute and to put down, by pains and penalties, the followers of Socinus? Every “overt act” of irreligion, of whatever description, is “injurious to society:”—is every such act to have its appropriate penalty,—of corporal infliction, pecuniary mulct, or imprisonment? Idolatry is an “overt act of wickedness,” and in its tendencies most “injurious to society:”—is summary vengeance to be taken on the worshippers of the Virgin, and the saints, and the host,—and, in conformity with the example of the Jewish rulers, six-sevenths at least of the population of our sister island to be either exterminated, or coerced into conformity to another faith and another worship? Whither are such principles to carry us? It is our comfort, that, even when hinted darkly and dubiously, they come too late in the thirty-fifth year of the nineteenth century!

It is now, so far as your patience is concerned, more than time I were at a close. Yet I have an important part of my subject still before me, which I cannot leave untouched. It is one, however, which, while it *admits of* great expansion, were it to be discussed in all its bearings, happily does not *require* it. I refer to the pecuniary support of the ministers and ordinances of religion, or to what has been appropriately termed *the Voluntary principle*.

I must despatch in very few words what relates to the Old Testament. We have formerly seen, that the tithes given by Abraham to Melchisedec, and those vowed to God by Jacob, were of the nature of free-will offerings, and distinct exemplifications of this very principle. We have other signal displays of it on record, in the accounts given us of the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness; of the preparation for the first temple by David, with his nobles and people, and the subsequent completion of the magnificent structure by Solomon; of the repairing of the house of the Lord in the reign of Joash; and of the building of the second temple after the captivity:—for although, in regard to this last transaction, there are many things in the conduct of the monarchs of Persia that more than savour of the spirit of eastern despotism, yet, so far as the Jews themselves were concerned, the voluntary principle pervades it.—The principal question requiring attention is that which relates to the *voluntary* or *compulsory* nature of the law of tithes in Israel. The denial of its compulsory character has been treated with a scorn which would require clearer evidence than exists in favour of compulsion, to justify it. Who ever heard, it is confidently asked, of a law without a penalty, or without means of enforcement?—This leads me at once to the distinction between the law being *obligatory*, and its being *compulsory*. When we affirm it to have been *obligatory*, we mean that it had in it the obligation of *divine command*. When we affirm it *not* to have been *compulsory*, we do not mean that it was accompanied with no threatened penalty, (for a law that may be transgressed with impunity is no law,) but only that there was no penalty annexed to its violation *to be inflicted by man*;—that the Lord, while he published the command, reserved the punishment of its infraction in his own hands. In support of this view of the case, I merely mention, without one word of comment, the following considerations:—1. That there is not the remotest approach to either an injunction or a permission to distrain, or to enforce payment by violence:—2. That there is no specified penalty for failure to pay, nor any intimated authority to prescribe one:—3. That there is no instance on record of any attempt at compulsion; which, had there been a law, or any thing that could be construed into a law, warranting it, is not, it is alleged, a very likely state of things, when the character of the ecclesiastics, at some periods of the history, as delineated by the prophets, is considered—Isa. lvi. 10, 11. “His watchmen are blind:



“ they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are all greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter:”—4. That there is presumptive evidence of the law having stood on a similar footing with the requisitions in behalf of “ the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow,” in the fact of “ the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow” being so repeatedly associated with “ the Levite,” both with regard to the appropriation of the tithe, and with regard to the general exercise of watchful care and liberal generosity:—5. That in certain other cases of a similar description, the *kind of penalty* threatened is one which it was competent to Jehovah alone to inflict. I refer to the half-shekel, or redemption-money—Exod. xxx. 12. “ When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; *that there be no plague among them*, when thou numberest them.” The penalty here threatened, I need not say, is one of exclusively divine infliction:—6. The instances alleged to the contrary are not instances of either compulsion or penalty;—they are instances only of the publication of the law, with the authority of Jehovah, and of the willing compliance of the people. That, in case there had not been such compliance, Nehemiah, Hezekiah, or any other ruler, would have proceeded to levy by compulsion, is an assumption, altogether gratuitous, of the point to be proved:—7. So far from there being any ground for such an assumption, there is not in the passages of the history—Nehem. xiii. 10—12. 2 Chron. xxxi. 4—8.—the slightest evidence of any thing like the work of a surveyor of taxes,—any thing of the nature of personal or domestic scrutiny and assessment,—any account taken of who paid and who did not pay—of who were obedient and who were defaulters. The people “ brought in,” evidently in many cases beyond what was due; so that, when Hezekiah “ saw the heaps” of the offerings collected, he “ blessed the Lord and his people Israel,”—delighted, as David had been on a similar occasion, with the spirit of liberality displayed.

I am not, however, very careful about the establishment of this position, because, even if the right of compulsory exaction were clearly made out, there would still be requisite the further proof, that the Jewish law of tithe itself retained any binding



obligation in Christian times;—a point which even the most eminent civilians give up as untenable.\*

I pass, then, from this, at once, to the view given us of the support of the Gospel in the New Testament records. And here there is, throughout, perfect clearness and simplicity.—

\* “Whether the special proportion of a tenth of our yearly revenues is due to the Christian clergy by a divine and unalterable right, is a point which has been agitated with great heat. It is affirmed by all the canonists, by most of the popish clergy, and by no inconsiderable number of the protestants, among whom our first reformers from popery may be reckoned: and it is denied by most of the protestant princes and states of Europe. The topics urged in proof of the affirmative are chiefly drawn from that article of the law of Moses, by which God himself ordained the tenth of the fruits of the ground to be given to the priests and Levites. Numb. xviii. 21 et seqq.—But, *first*, this argument is improper in a question what the Divine law is in the Christian church:—for the Mosaic law, in so far as related to the policy of the Jewish church, was not given forth as a rule to other nations; and, being but temporary in respect even of the Jews, lost its force at the coming of our Saviour, when the order itself of the priests and Levites was abolished.—*Secondly*, The popish clergy, who offer this plea, do themselves disclaim the obligatory force of the Jewish law, where it interferes with their views of power or interest; for they have, in spite of an ordinance of Moses, which prohibits the Levites to possess lands in their own right, Numb. xviii. 23, 24. drawn to the church, besides the tithes, a considerable property in land, in all the countries that acknowledge the see of Rome. There can be no doubt of the sentiments of the Scottish legislature on this point since the Reformation; for our sovereigns, instead of transferring the tithes from the popish to the protestant clergy, have assumed the power of bestowing grants of the greatest part of them to laymen, with the burden of reasonable stipends to the clergy; which grants have been, either expressly, or by consequence, ratified in parliament.” Erskine’s Institute of the Law of Scotland—Edit. 1824, page 475.

“Most of the popish and some protestant divines have concluded teinds to be *jure divino*, as being institute and consecrate by God himself, having a moral and perpetual foundation,—that those who are set apart from worldly affairs to the service of God should have a competent livelihood from those for whom they serve; but the determination of the quota to be the tenth part rather than any other proportion, is a positive law that God manifested, and was observed before the written word; and was retained by the heathen even after they had deviated from the true God. But most of the protestant divines hold teinds to be the voluntary dedication and consecration of men for pious uses, and to have continued in a tenth part from the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and of the divine constitution in the judicial law; but there is now no divine moral precept in the word for teinds, of which there is no mention in the New Testament, even where the maintenance of ministers is properly spoken to, but only that ‘those who serve at the altar should live by the altar,’—that ‘those who sow spiritual things should reap temporal things;’ which doth hold forth a moral duty of recompense, to provide a competent livelihood for those who are separate from the world for our cause, but doth not infer a tenth part, or any other determinate proportion, but what is convenient.”—Lord Stair’s Institutions of the Law of Scotland—4th edit. vol. ii. B. ii. chap. 8. § 4.

Few things have surprised or grieved me more, than the manner of speaking and writing in which some, even good men, have indulged themselves in regard to the *voluntary principle*. If, throughout the New Testament, this principle had been pronounced incompetent, and its opposite had been plainly and peremptorily inculcated, we might have had less ground of astonishment at the acrimony of reproach, and the affectation of pity, and the violence of contempt and ridicule, with which it and its supporters have at times been assailed. The *spirit* of the opposition we might still have had good cause to condemn, as being inconsistent with the genius of the New Testament, and with the manner there prescribed and exemplified of opposing even the opponents of the truths and laws of God;—but we should have had less reason to marvel at its extent and decidedness. Surely it is not a little affecting, to find, for example, that eminent individual, whose eloquence has so often and so powerfully been expended in pleading for the abandonment of all compulsory assessments for the poor, and for casting them upon the mighty energies and unfailing resources of a spontaneous benevolence, now depreciating the power of Christian charity, and speaking of its “*inherent and essential feebleness*.” For what is the voluntary principle, but the principle of Christian charity? Yet “*the Voluntaries*” has become a designation of scorn, as if, in maintaining voluntaryism, we had been setting ourselves in an attitude of defiance to the entire tenor of the precepts and the practice of the apostles of Christ. Have our brethren really and clearly made it out, that there is no such thing as the voluntary principle to be found in the New Testament,—that they allow themselves such liberties in their treatment of it? No such thing! did I say? I rather ask them, if, searching it from end to end, they have found any thing else? Is there a single text, or a single example, to the contrary? How stands the fact? The support of the Gospel,—of the church,—of its ordinances, of its poor, of its ministers, of its propagation,—all was in *the church itself*. It is more especially with the maintenance of the ministry, that the question has been connected; but the *principle* applies to all those interests of the kingdom, for which pecuniary contribution was in any way required. The Lord Jesus Christ by his apostles committed all the concerns of the church to *the church itself*. And in this it may be observed, he did the same that he had done of old. Formerly, when

the nation of Israel was the church of God, the support of the ordinances and ministers of his sanctuary was found within itself. Under the new dispensation, the church ceased to be national, except as consisting of "the holy nation and peculiar people;" but still, the support of the ordinances and ministers of its sanctuary was found within itself. It is just as much a violation of the principles and obligations of the New Testament kingdom, to ally it with the State for the support of its worship, as it would have been offensive to Jehovah, had the church of Israel allied itself, for the maintenance of his institutions, with Egypt or Assyria, with Philistia or Amalek.

The transference of the support of divine ordinances, and of the advancement of the cause of Christ, from the church itself to the civil power, I cannot but regard as an act of equal *presumption* and *meanness*.—It is an act of presumption:—for if the great Head of the church has vested the upholding of the interests of his kingdom *in his own subjects*,—whence comes their right to transfer that burden,—even supposing it were felt one,—to the shoulders of others? Are the people of Christ to be considered as entitled, at their pleasure, to exonerate themselves of the obligations which their Lord and King has laid upon them?—are they warranted to say, It is no matter, provided the thing be done, whether it be done by ourselves or by others for us,—whether it be done in our Master's way or in our own? They have not—they cannot have—a right to act thus.—And while there is presumption in such procedure, there is something more,—there is *meanness*:—yes—meanness,—pitiful, contracted, abject littleness of spirit. I can never, without a rising emotion of indignant scorn, hear the inducement held out to the people of our city and country, in order to ingratiate the Established church in their affections, that it is the church which *costs them nothing*—which provides them their religion *free of charge*! I ask my brethren on the other side of the question, whether this bears any resemblance to the spirit of the New Testament. *There*, it is not merely inculcated as a duty, it is held forth as a privilege, and an honour, and a blessing, to do any thing, however little, according to ability, for the kingdom of Jesus Christ. *There*, I find the high-toned, the divine principle—"It is more blessed to give than to receive!"—Let me not be told, the consideration of cheapness and gratuitousness is urged only in behalf of the poor;—and that the Establishment is "*the poor*

*man's church.*"\*—Most cordially do I grant, that "to the poor the Gospel must be preached." But I ask, is not this, too, a part of the charge committed to the church of God?—Yes; and a charge which she dare not relinquish to others, without dishonour to her Lord. What! are there not resources within the kingdom for the kingdom's own exigencies? THERE WERE FOR CENTURIES. THERE ARE STILL. It is to the shame,—the burning shame, of the subjects of that kingdom, that they should allow themselves to be the taunt of all the infidels and ungodly worldlings in the country, that they cannot get on without *their* help! Our brethren may call this, if they will, "the earth helping the woman:"—I call it the church betraying its Lord;—"the Bride, the Lamb's wife," doing dishonour to her kind and liberal husband. It is a mean-spirit-edness, unworthy the followers of Him "who, though he was rich, for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might be made rich." Where now are those who, in the days of his flesh, followed the lowly Redeemer, ministering to him of their substance?—Where are the Barnabases of apostolic times?—Where is the fragrance of that costly spikenard, of which the memorial accompanies the Gospel wherever it is preached, in testimony of the Saviour's approbation, and in reprehension of the murmurings of the ungenerous? Where is the remembrance, and where the spirit, of our Master's own test of discipleship—"Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple?"—The dereliction of the support of his church, and the devolving of it on the governments of this world,—and glorying in exemption from the burden, as if it were quite an achievement for his cause,—is a procedure of the same character, only that its turpitude is still more flagrant and its baseness more abject, with Israel's having recourse, in their straits, to the enemies of their God. And it has been, in the experience of the church, as in that of Israel. What has the State been, as to all the best interests of the spiritual community, but what Egypt was to Israel—a broken reed, that "pierces the hand," and "rends the shoulder" of him who trusts to its support?

I have said, that the principles on which the gospel and gospel ordinances are to be maintained, are laid down in the

\* The legitimacy of this high claim in behalf of the Established Church it is not mine to disprove. In Lecture V. by the Rev. Mr King, delivered ere this was finished at press, it will be found set in its proper light.

New Testament with all possible simplicity and precision. Without dwelling on the great general maxims and motives of liberality to every good work by which it is pervaded,—let me come, for a few moments, to the maintenance of the Christian ministry.—On this important subject, then, we have two things plainly stated:—first, the *general ordinance for the support of such a ministry*, and, secondly, the *source of the supply*.—The former we find, in the midst of a spirited discussion of the subject, on the grounds of generosity, and equity, and the example of ancient institution,—1 Cor. ix. 14. “Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”—Nothing can be plainer. I certainly must decline all argument with the man who is so inconsiderate, or so disingenuous, as to insist that the words “*Even so*,”—or “*so also*,”—(οὕτω καὶ) ought to be interpreted as meaning, that the preachers of the gospel should be supported *in the same way* as of old, namely, amongst other Old Testament means, *by tithes*;—which is to represent an inspired apostle as announcing, with all authority, an ordinance of the Lord,—to which, notwithstanding, there was, at the time, no required obedience, and to which there is not a single recorded hint of any subsequent conformity, in any one of the apostolic churches! In this, as in not a few other instances, we are entitled to interpret precepts by facts. Had there been anything in the narrative of the New Testament churches, indicating a conformity to Old Testament practice in this particular, this would have given countenance to such an interpretation of the apostle’s words,—although, even then, it would have been a very undefined and a very unwonted mode of expressing his meaning:—but, not only is there nothing in the record to favour it,—there is every thing that could well be, in the form of fact and principle, directly against it.\* The simple and peremptory ordinance is,—“that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”—*From whom*, then, is their support to come? This is the next question; and the answer to it is not less explicit. I refer you to two texts. The one is in the same connexion with the former,—1 Cor. ix. 11, 12. “If we “have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we “shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of “this power over you, are not we rather?”—This latter question clearly shows the ground on which the apostle rests the right

\* Mr Fleming actually takes the ground referred to. Critique, pp. 47, 48.



or power which he asserts. It is on the ground, that they on whom labour is expended are bound, according to their ability, to recompense the labourer. "If others—are not *we rather?*" Why? certainly because he had laboured more than others for *their* benefit.—Thus too, in the precept of Moses, of which he applies the principle,—“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,”—it is the owner’s corn the ox eats, for whom he performs the labour.—The second text is Gal. vi. 6. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”—Mr Scott’s note on these words is—and with his comment I satisfy myself, as quite sufficient,—“The Lord had appointed the office of the ministry, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers: and accordingly the apostle exhorted the Galatians to contribute to the comfortable maintenance of their teachers, who instructed them from the word of God; communicating to them a proportion of their temporal good things, according to their ability.”

Such, then, is the principle. And it is the same that, in other passages, is inculcated on the churches in regard to their pastors, in somewhat more general terms, though inclusive, at the same time, of attention to their temporal comfort:—1 Thes. v. 12, 13. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”—The principle is not, of course, to be interpreted, as if it precluded the strong from helping the weak,—the richer churches, as well as individuals, from imparting voluntary aid to the poorer. There is a general obligation that lies upon the entire Christian community, to maintain the interests of their Lord’s cause, by a reciprocation of benevolent assistance, and a generous combination of common resources:—“For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened; but by an equality,—that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality.” 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14.—And there cannot be a more serious mistake, than that it matters little whence the support comes. I might show you, in many respects, how much it does matter, both as to the giver and as to the receiver. I satisfy myself for the present, however, with remarking, that it is one of the purposes of the Lord Jesus Christ to present to the world, in the fellowship of his church, and the practical working of the spiritual

affections by which its members are united, *an exhibition of the power of principle*. But the exhibition is lost, and the purpose frustrated, when the church transfers any part of her own peculiar duties to the world. Where, in the case before us, is the manifestation of principle,—where is the glory of Christ,—when it becomes a matter of doubt, even according to the terms in which they speak of themselves, whether the ministers of the gospel, in receiving their support, are to be regarded as servants of Christ or servants of the crown? Where were the New Testament views of this subject, when the following sentences were penned?—"We do not pretend to have a right, *as members of the church of Christ*, to use compulsion to make good our stipends. But if the State confer upon us certain civil privileges, we have a right, *as members of a civil kingdom*, to make these good in the ordinary way. It is not on the ground of our being ministers of Christ, that we are entitled to make demand, or that you are obliged to make payment; but it is on the ground of our being subjects of a civil kingdom, in whose favour certain civil rights have been legally constituted. The most ridiculous misapprehensions prevail on this subject, as if the revenues of the ecclesiastical establishment were an exaction of *the church*, an exaction of one body of Christians upon another. But the fact beyond doubt is, that the claim is a purely civil one, although it may be loosely termed ecclesiastical, as being about an ecclesiastical matter. It is a claim of the State upon its subjects; and in that view alone are they required to make it good under the usual penalties of law."\*—Is Christ honoured or disgraced, in this avowed degradation of the ministers of his kingdom to the situation of State pensioners? Many and painful are the thoughts which this extraordinary statement forces upon the mind. I shall only put it to the respected brother in the ministry by whom it was written, whether, in making it, he does not renounce entirely, in his capacity of *minister of Christ*, his right to the support which he receives. I say "entirely;" and I mean by the word, in both his relations, his relation to the State, and his relation to the Church. My position is,—and I beg his attention to it,—that in his capacity of *minister of Christ* he does not receive his stipend (on the supposition of its coming from State-endowment) on the ground of any right or title whatever. For, on the one hand,

\* Brown's Civil Establishments defended, p. 140.

it is not in this capacity that *the State* pays him, or gives him his right to payment, seeing it is not in this capacity that he is entitled to exact the payment: it is avowedly, and exclusively, "as a member of a civil kingdom." But then, on the other hand, if it is not as a minister of Christ that he receives his stipend, it follows that he has not his right to it from the *New Testament canon*; for it is only for ministers of Christ *as such* that that canon enacts provision. Thus, as a minister of Christ, he has no right to what he receives in either statute-book,—that of the civil kingdom, or that of the spiritual; and himself and brethren appear before us, on their own showing, as mere pensioners of the crown.—I beseech them, at the risk of being rebuked for my presumption, perhaps for my impertinence, to lay it to their consciences, whether such a state of things be in harmony with the representations of the New Testament, and to honour the divine Head of the church by a return to "the simplicity that is in Christ," and a fearless submission to the manifest and peremptory dictates of his will.

I am not one of those, if such there be, who, with the full and firm conviction of the authority of the Voluntary principle, as the principle that stands out in the New Testament in all the prominence of precept and example, close their eyes to the existing defectiveness of its influence. In too many places, and churches, and persons, is this defectiveness apparent. But it ill becomes those to taunt us with it, whose system, along with causes that are seated in human nature, has so sadly contributed to its production.—If it is the principle on which the kingdom of the Redeemer was originally constituted, it is the principle which he will bless; and the aim of all should be, to rouse the whole church of God to a due consideration of the sin and shame of such deficiency, and of the necessity of a return to the spirit and the practice of primitive times.—It is a cheering spectacle, to see our friends of the Establishment setting themselves of late, so vigorously, to the process of "restoring suspended animation" to that body; and even their partial success is not a little gratifying. But it can only be partial,—only temporary. The benumbing paralyzing influence remains. It cannot be till the church shall thoroughly emerge from the unhealthy vapours—the heavy, sickly, deadening *malaria*—of her State connexions, and shall inhale, on the mountains of Zion, the purer and more salubrious air of a spiritual independence, that she can go forth again in the flush, and freshness, and

energy of her early prime. May the Lord, by his word, and providence, and Spirit, hasten her deliverance!—Then, she shall “go out with joy, and be led forth with peace:—the  
“ mountains and the hills shall break forth before her into  
“ singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands:—  
“ instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of  
“ the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to  
“ the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not  
“ be cut off!”

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# LECTURE THIRD:

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE  
GLASGOW VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION

UNJUST IN THEIR PRINCIPLE,  
AND INJURIOUS IN THEIR EFFECTS.

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DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 17th, IN THE  
RELIEF CHURCH, JOHN STREET.

By HUGH HEUGH, D. D.

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1835.





## LECTURE.

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THE chief inquiry on the subject of Civil Establishments of Religion unquestionably is, Whether they have the sanction of the sacred Scriptures? If they have, the question is decided in the judgment of every consistent believer in the perfection and authority of Divine revelation, and all reasonings against them must be vain and sinful. If they have not this high sanction, but, on the contrary, are opposed to the revealed will of God respecting the constitution, the support, and the extension of his church, then all reasonings in their favour must be fallacious and wrong. And while I freely acknowledge that to this aspect of the question I feel myself drawn by my strongest preferences and inclinations, I rejoice that the examination of this department of the controversy has fallen into the hands of that distinguished person,\* who, with a clearness and a strength of reasoning, and a felicity and elegance of diction, equalled only by that pure and elevated tone of Christian feeling in which all his reasonings were conducted and expressed, has instructed and delighted his friends, without, I am sure, affording any just cause of offence to his opponents.

But while I pay this tribute to *the scriptural argument*, as it has been denominated, for the sake of distinction, I am far from supposing that it exhausts the subject. A large field remains to be examined; and that department of it which I have been induced to undertake, will be readily admitted to be only second in importance to the former, as it is scarcely less ample in its limits;—namely, *that Civil Establishments of Religion are unjust in their principle, and injurious in their effects.*

There are two forms in which Civil Establishments of Religion may be conceived to exist. They may equally sanction and support the various denominations of religion-

\* Dr. Wardlaw.

ists existing within the nation; or they may be limited to one denomination, or to more than one, excluding others. Something approaching to the first form existed in America, and exists in France; the second is the form in which they appear in this country, and in the European States generally. As I believe our opponents unite with us in condemning the first, and as it is, on obvious grounds, so utterly indefensible, inasmuch as it affords the positive sanction and influence of the nation, to the encouragement and support of the very worst, equally with the very best, forms of religion, I shall confine myself in the observations that follow, to the second—that is, to institutions commonly denominated, *exclusive Civil Establishments of Religion*.

Now, the proposition which I shall endeavour to defend, affirms, first, that they are *unjust in their principle*—and, next, that they are *injurious in their effects*. I begin with attempting to make out the first.

*They are unjust in their principle.* What is the principle on which these exclusive institutions are based? It is, that the state, by its civil power, may interpose for the support and extension of the religious opinions entertained by some one portion of the community. Or, more particularly, it is that the state has the right to select the religious creed of some portion of the nation, to sanction that creed by its legislative approbation, and to extend special favour, by pecuniary endowments raised at the public cost, to those who hold, or who profess to hold, this favoured creed. We assert that the principle of this arrangement, and that the arrangement itself founded upon it, are unjust.

Justice demands of the state, that it extend to the whole body of the people equal laws, and an equal administration of them; but by the arrangement in question, the nation is divided into two parties, and laws are made, and these laws are carried into effect, in favour of one party exclusively, and yet at the cost of the other party also. Does not this arrangement bear on the face of it an obvious departure from that equality which justice demands? Is not the arrangement, therefore, and is not the principle of the arrangement, unjust?

The injustice is rendered more striking, by attending to the following circumstances which accompany it:—first, no crime is alleged against the discountenanced party, it

being understood that they may be good and loyal subjects equally with the favoured party—next, they are required, equally with the favoured class to obey the laws, and bear the burdens appointed by the state—and, finally, the privileges extended to the favoured, are, at the expense of the other class, equally with them. The injustice, then, appears in this arbitrary form:—we demand of you the same allegiance, we exact from you the same services, we lay upon you the same burdens, as if you belonged to the favoured denomination; and we demand that you contribute, under pains of law, to the cost of certain privileges which we have bestowed on them; but we do not command them to contribute in their turn to the support of those institutions which we permit you to maintain among yourselves. It is difficult to conceive any civil arrangement which should bear the character of injustice, if this does not.

This injustice will become still more apparent by the supposition of analogous cases.—Suppose *courts of law* instituted by the state for the benefit of one class of the subjects exclusively; suppose the building of the court-houses, the keeping of them in repair, the salaries of the judges and of the other officials, and the very costs of the suits, should be defrayed, not exclusively by that class of the community who alone have access to these courts, but from funds raised by compulsory exactions from the whole body of the people, would there be two opinions in any enlightened country respecting the injustice of such an arrangement?—Or, suppose that the state should form a *medical institution* for the advantage of one class of the community, that the expense incurred by the erection of the medical schools, by the salaries of the teachers, or the medical halls for the preparation of medicines, should be raised by a tax, not confined to those who alone would derive benefit from the national institution, but extended to those excluded from it, and who had institutions of their own to provide for, would the injustice of the principle on which the state proceeded in forming this institution be doubted by any man?—Or, to take a municipal case;—suppose that the magistrates in this city were to provide a *police establishment*, the protection afforded by which was specially confined to one class of the inhabitants, the other class being left to provide at their private cost, for the protection of their persons and their property by night and by

day, while the legal establishment was maintained by the public funds to which the whole citizens equally contributed, where should we find defenders of the justice of this arrangement?—But I ask confidently, can that be just in regard to religion, which is unjust when applied to law, or medicine, or police? The injustice is the same, apply it to what objects you may.

Even at the risk of multiplying unnecessarily illustrations of so plain a subject, I shall take one other example. As far as the character of the arrangement is concerned, the case would not be altered, were the favoured and discountenanced parties *separated by place rather than by sentiment*. As it is, those connected, and those unconnected, with the Established churches, are locally mingled, inhabiting together the same towns, villages, and rural districts over the country. But suppose the religious establishment were local, the favoured and discountenanced classes being thus separated by place, and the injustice would become more palpable, but in truth, not more real. If I am compelled to pay for some caprice, or some comfort, of another person, it is the same to me, and the act compelling me has the same character, whether that person lodge in the next house, or live a hundred miles from me. Suppose that the inhabitants of Edinburgh had a religious establishment for which the inhabitants of Glasgow were forced to contribute equally with those of the favoured metropolis—suppose that the annuity-tax of Edinburgh were extended to Glasgow, and that the inhabitants of this city were by express statute compelled to pay five or six pounds on every hundred of their rental, not for the support of their own religious institutions, but to eke out the Edinburgh tax for the support of its own, would not Glasgow unanimously and indignantly denounce the injustice of this arrangement? Many plausible arguments would be brought forward in its favour, I have no doubt, for what unjust law, or usage, has not found specious, able, and even honest defenders?—and many imposing pleas would be advanced by the ingenuity and talent abounding in the favoured capital, whose clever sons would exhaust their eloquence in speeches and pamphlets in support of their own monopoly, and would labour hard to enlighten the inhabitants of the West on the many advantages which even they might derive from the blaze of religious light, which, by their payment of this annuity-tax, they would



contribute to preserve in splendour, in the metropolis of their own land; but all would be in vain, for no unperverted mind would be able to reconcile itself to the injustice of the impost. It may be less obviously, but it is not less really unjust, to compel the community *mingled*, than it would be to compel the community *separated*, to support one favoured denomination of its members.

Objections may be brought against the statement which I have now given; and it is fit that these should be obviated.

1. It may be said, that the statement I have made proceeds on the supposition, that the Establishment is only for the benefit of a party, whereas it is national, and no individual in the land is excluded from its advantages. To which I reply, it may *be denominated* national, but this will not render it so. It is the Establishment of one party in the nation, which not only fact shews, but which its exclusive character assumes. In this view, it is no more for the benefit of the dissenters, who form part of the nation, than their institutions are for the benefit of it. And although no legal prohibition excludes any one from its advantages, any more than the members of the Established church are thus excluded from the advantages to be enjoyed in the churches of the dissenters; yet in the one case, as in the other, conscience interposes—conscience that ought to be more powerful, and is entitled to higher respect, than any appointments or prohibitions enacted by human laws.

2. It has been argued, that it will not follow that a tax is unjust merely because those on whom it is imposed may pretend, or may have, conscientious objections to the paying of it; and our opponents delight to amuse themselves by remarking how abundantly conscientious the community would quickly become, if the plea of conscience would exempt them from taxation. It belongs to another department of this course to shew, that civil force ought never to be employed to compel the support of religion; but to answer the objection, it suffices to remark, that the injustice is not rested on *the opinion formed of it* by those whom it affects, but on *the nature of the case itself*, independently of particular opinions respecting it, namely, that it is unjust to tax one portion of the community for institutions from which they can derive no benefit. In any one of the analogous instances supposed, it would be no proper reply to the complaint of injustice by the parties affected, to tell them that it is ab-

surd to think that the pretext of conscience can exempt men from paying taxes; when the reply could be instantly made, we do not rest our claim on what you cannot be supposed to judge of, the dictates of our consciences, we rest it on the proved injustice of the case.\*

3. It has been very plausibly remarked, that under the Old Testament an exclusive religious establishment existed by the express authority of God, and that the objection to such institutions now, grounded on their supposed injustice, would affix the character of unrighteousness to a system which had God for its author, and would thus impeach the rectitude of the Judge of the whole earth. "Do you mean to say," our opponents ask us, "that what God himself did was unjust?" Were such an inference deducible from our principles, it would be fatal to them. We ascribe righteousness to our Maker, and we believe that "justice and judgment" shone conspicuous in all his arrangements respecting the ancient church. But we deny that the facts connected with the Divine establishment of the Jews invalidate, in the slightest degree, our assertion of the injustice

\* The inconsistency and the levity with which some defenders of Establishments treat the plea of conscience has been frequently and justly exposed. If we say, we have conscientious objections to this tax, they reply, "Is it only to religious matters that conscience extends? You ought to be conscientious in all you do. And thus, you may pretend conscience against paying any tax, with the object of which you say you are dissatisfied." And again they tell us, "conscience has nothing to do with the matter—it is an affair of the purse only." It is for them to reconcile these inconsistencies. But surely it ill becomes clerical writers to sneer at difficulties which a conscientious man feels, in honestly attempting to reconcile his duty to his country, with his duty to Christ; to get quit of the mental embarrassment he cannot but feel, in being compelled to lend his support, even indirectly, to a system which, in his conscience, he condemns. To quote the words of an able writer, "Churchmen carry their contempt of conscience imprudently far. Their animadversions on our religious scruples, if they have any weight whatever, prove that conscience should never be heard—that subjects should in all cases do whatever kings bid them. Though a deed the most atrocious, the most unchristian and irreligious, should be enjoined by royal pleasure—though a tax should be imposed to aid in extirpating Christianity altogether, they might still rebuke complaints of conscience, by exclaiming as formerly, "Is religion, we ask, the only subject over which conscience holds empire? We doubt not but all men would become very conscientious, if they were allowed to plead exemption from the payment of a tax, because of their scruples respecting the object to which that tax is to be applied."

of exclusive human establishments of religion. I do not rest this on the fact, that the Jewish establishment did not include compulsory taxation for its support, much less a compulsory tax on those who could derive no benefit from the national institution; although it deserves to be remarked, that no arrangement resembling this is to be found in the whole word of God. To tax a whole nation for the benefit of one party in that nation, is purely and exclusively human; under no Divine economy have we the least trace of such an arrangement. I take other ground; and hold that God may justly do, or require to be done, that which, without injustice, we dare not do. God has rights in regard to his creatures, which they have not in regard to one another; and it is unjust and impious in creatures to usurp these rights, or to act towards others as if they possessed them. God is the author of human life, which his guilty creatures have forfeited by sin, and he can deprive them of that life when he pleases. Dare we do so?—It is the right of the sovereign Lord to employ, if he chooses, some of his creatures to execute his judgments upon others, for offences which the victims have committed, not against their executioners, but against God. Thus, he employed the Israelites to exterminate the Amorites, and his procedure was just. Dare we act so, without injustice and inhumanity, to any tribe around us?—God has a right to the property of others, and may justly deprive the guilty of his abused property in their possession; and by a special and divinely authenticated grant, he might transfer the property of one to another; as he gave the substance of Egypt to Israel, as he gave also the land and the cities and the whole wealth of the Canaanites to that people. Dare we thus interfere with the property of others, without incurring the guilt of injustice and robbery?—God is Lord of the conscience. He can justly inflict penal visitations on his moral subjects for their religious errors; or, as in the penal statutes of the ancient economy, respecting Sabbath-breaking, idolatry, blasphemy, and other religious offences, he can justly appoint that the offenders should “die the death” by the hands of their fellow men. But will any man be bold enough to say, that without injustice, and the guilt of murder, we could thus shed the blood of sinners against God, unless by special appointment, the Judge of all were to constitute us the executioners of his vengeance? “The wages of sin is death;”

but it belongs to God to assign the doom, both as it regards the first and the second death; and we dare not usurp his throne, and inflict the first, any more than the second, for sin done against God, and of which he alone is the just avenger. I have dwelt so long on this objection, because it is so often, and so confidently urged; and I trust you are satisfied that it does not follow that we impute injustice to God, because we affirm that he gave institutions to Israel which it would be unjust in us to imitate.

4. On the head of objections, I shall allude only to one other topic, which, indeed, most frequently meets us as a vague, though prevailing feeling, than as a defined objection to our views. Yet it is also brought forward in the more tangible form of an objection; and, I doubt not, has considerable influence with the many. It is this—that if Civil Establishments of Religion are unjust, it is inconceivable that they should not only have obtained the sanction of so many good men, who are as hostile to injustice as we can be, but that they should have found their way into the legislation of the most enlightened states in the world. Plausible as this is, and well suited to influence those who are averse to the labour of thinking for themselves, it is, at the best, but an argument from human authority, which may be brought to prove the most absurd positions; and which, beside withdrawing the mind from the subject itself, to human opinions respecting it, destroys itself in various ways. From the opinions of those who defend, we can appeal to the opinions of those who reject, Civil Establishments of Religion; and then the question returns, Which of them are in the right? Again, this appeal to opinion, or to human law, would operate as a barrier to all improvement, would extinguish free inquiry, and would lead to this worst species of optimism, that whatever *is*, by the sanction of opinion and law, is right, and ought to be perpetuated—a principle which would have kept Europe in the slumber and midnight of the dark ages, would have crushed the Reformation in its birth, and would render all future generations, not the freemen of God and truth, striving to outstrip, in the race of improvement, those who have gone before them, but the abject vassals and slaves of the past generations. It is the birthright of Britons to examine with freedom, yet respect, even the laws and institutions of their country, and with faithful and honest intrepidity to



expose their injustice, if they are unjust, in order to their amendment; nor is it possible that the great and salutary changes which have happily taken place in the legislation of Great Britain, from the earliest history of the constitution down to our own times, could have been effected, had not the folly and the injustice of many laws which once disgraced the British statute-book been faithfully exposed, in opposition to those optimists and pseudo-loyalists, by whom they were defended and extolled, as the very perfection of righteousness and wisdom. And were the attempt made to recal those laws which have happily been abrogated, it would be resisted now, on the ground of their injustice, as well as their impolicy?

I have thus endeavoured to shew you the injustice which belongs to exclusive Establishments of Religion, and I have endeavoured to set aside those objections which our opponents are accustomed to adduce. But I am persuaded that I should present the case very partially and inadequately, were I to leave this part of the subject without adverting to some other circumstances which are fitted to shew the amount and magnitude of the injustice which is done.

Among these circumstances, the first I select is this—that the injustice complained of receives the sanction of public law. It is, in this view, the nation acting unjustly to a portion of its own members. Injustice does not alter its quality, when it is done by one, and when it is done by many. An unjust act is criminal, though committed in the least important and most private transaction, and by the most obscure and most uninfluential individual; and that act becomes worse, when it is the result of the adoption of an unjust principle. But when such an act is done, and such a principle is adopted, not by an individual, but by a community, and by those in that community who ought to be the examples and the guardians of righteousness, and by them incorporated with the decisions of the state, injustice then appears in its worst and most perilous form—it is iniquity decreed by a law.

The result of this ascent of injustice into the highest places, and into the laws of the state, is, that it tends to perpetuate itself by acquiring a great accession of influence in its favour. How much easier is it to prevent bad laws from being enacted, than to procure their repeal after their



enactment has taken place. The subject of the enactment becomes venerable in the eyes of multitudes, by having the great for its supporters, and law for its authority and its defence. It insensibly incorporates itself with the modes of thinking and feeling prevalent in the community. Opposition is first discouraged as being hopeless, and then, as hopeless, is laid aside. Reason apart, a national prejudice is apt to be created in its favour, and it is looked upon as unnational, unpatriotic, to oppose it. The public mind becomes torpid to all appeals on the subject, usage prevails over reason; suffrage over argument; might over right. The principle takes root in the country as if indigenous in the soil; its roots strike deep, its seeds are scattered every where; and long and severe labour is necessary to eradicate them. A prejudice is created against all who attempt the work, as reckless innovators, as a set of vain speculatists, who have the presumption to prefer their own rash theories and modern dogmas, to the wisdom of their ancestors, and the experience of all antiquity; as men fitted to root up, but not to plant; to cast down, not to build up; to revolutionize, rather than to preserve and to establish.

The injustice is directed against whole bodies of people. It is criminal to be unjust to one; but injustice is multiplied, if I may so speak, when it is applied to many. Embodied in legislation, it is extended to all whom that legislation affects, and if we apply this principle to *time*, as well as *local extent*, then this injustice is multiplied in its acts indefinitely, extending to every individual dissenter in past, as well as in present times.

The highest aggravation of the evil, however, remains to be noticed. It is, that this injustice is done ostensibly in the cause of religion, and for the professed object of establishing the kingdom of Him who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre. "It may be wrong," say our opponents, "to establish a false religion; but can it be wrong to establish the true? It may be wrong, and it is so, to lend the sanction of public law, and the support of public wealth, to the cause of error and sin; but how monstrous the assertion, that it is wrong to lend any sort or amount of support to the cause of truth, and of righteousness?" To say nothing here of the question, Who has authorised you to come

between God and your fellow men, and after *He* has given to all equally a plain revelation of his will on religious and moral truth, to determine for them what that revelation implies; and having made the bold decision, to impart to it the authority and the sanction of national law—to say nothing of such a question, “Who hath required this at your hands?”—can we conceal from our minds the application to the case before us of the maxim, that the end will in no instance sanctify the means? We must not do evil that good may come. We are not to speak or act wickedly for God, or for the cause of God. And if injustice must never be resorted to in order to accomplish any common end, can we conceive it farther or more mischievously misplaced, than when it is resorted to, and that on the plea of necessity, for supporting a system the most hostile to all unrighteousness, and which has God himself for its Defender and its Author?

The second position implied in the subject of the Lecture now comes to be considered, *that exclusive Civil Establishments of Religion are injurious in their effects*. If I have succeeded in the preceding reasonings, my task here is comparatively easy; for injustice acted upon becomes injury. The unrighteous law may slumber in the statute-book; and reasons may be found in the benevolence or the fears of the rulers, or in the intelligence and spirit of the people, forbidding the practical operation of the unjust enactment, as, I believe, many of the laws of the Stuarts respecting Dissenters remain unrepealed to this day, though now inoperative. But let the statute be acted upon, and injury is the result. The laws constituting our Establishments of Religion are no dead letter; they have been living and producing their effects for ages; and, as is the fountain, so have been the streams—as I shall now endeavour to shew.

Let me, first, however, anticipate an objection. When we represent Civil Establishments of Religion as injurious, and in proof of this appeal to facts, our opponents meet us by facts also. They assert, that in place of being injurious they have been great blessings to the country; and they appeal to their thousands of churches—to the talented and pious ministers who serve, or have served, in many of these churches—to the writings, as well as to the pastoral labours

of many of these ministers—and to the souls savingly benefited under the ordinances dispensed within the walls of the Establishments. Now, I do not stop here to show that this is a partial statement of the case—to remark on the small comparative extent to which evangelical truth, as exhibited in the standards of the British Establishments, is taught within these Establishments, (England and Ireland being included,) even up to this hour, according to the statements of the best friends of these churches—to the long-standing distinction betwixt *moderate* and *evangelical* in Scotland, the former so long predominating, and to similar distinctions in England—or to the extent to which the direct and indirect influence of the Voluntary principle has been appealed to by the members of these churches themselves, as accounting, to a great extent, for the measure of evangelical administration in these churches; I say, I do not here insist on this statement, although I do not set it aside. I admit, with pleasure, the facts of our opponents, as far as they can be maintained. Far from wishing to shut our eyes to such facts, we hail them with satisfaction. But to whatever extent these facts exist, we hold they are not the result of the churches being *established*, but of the ministry of divine truth, under the blessing of God; and were proof of this necessary, additional to the mere statement of it, we can appeal to facts in abundance, which our opponents never have questioned, nor can question—to the saving effects of the truth during those first centuries of the Christian era, when Establishments were unknown—to the same effects among the faithful who kept separate from the Established Churches during the long and dark reign of superstition—to the triumphs of the first reformers, ere ever their systems received the sanction of the European states—and to the amount of true religion, which, notwithstanding all that has passed, very few of our opponents will deny, among British Dissenters, and in the American churches. In a word, as the friends of Establishments do not question that spiritual good is done in churches who plead the Voluntary principle as the exclusive mean of upholding and propagating Christianity, or who have never resorted to any other means, notwithstanding this alleged error in the constitution or practice of these churches; so there is no inconsistency in the admission, on the part of the friends of the Voluntary principle, that spiritual good is done in churches

established by law, notwithstanding their erroneously resorting to compulsion and state alliance for the support of their institutions. I shall now adduce particular illustrations of alleged injury.

And I begin with noticing the *pecuniary injury* sustained by Dissenters. This, I acknowledge, is the least of it; but still it ought not to be overlooked. Had Dissenters the power, and were they to employ it, of compelling, by legal force, the friends of Establishments to supply funds for erecting and repairing the churches, paying the ministers, and conducting the worship of their party, would not a pecuniary injury be manifestly inflicted, and would it not be loudly and justly complained of, by those by whom it was sustained? The injury cannot be less when sustained by Dissenters for the sake of Churchmen. I shall not advert here to the attempt which has been made to prove, that the churches established cost the country nothing; satisfied as I am, that this is just as palpably absurd, as it would be to attempt to prove, that the civil government, or that the military establishments cost the country nothing. But an expedient of another kind is adopted, not for denying the injury, but throwing an air of ridicule on all complaints on account of its infliction. The sum contributed by Dissenters is calculated—the small item which would fall to each is given—and the minuteness of the payment is made to contrast with the loudness of the complaint. This may be good humour, but it is very bad morality. If, against his will, and unjustly, I take from an individual the most inconsiderable sum, I shall find the ridicule poured on the man for his complaining of an injury so small, a sorry shield for my conduct in this unwarranted interference with his property. It is an old and sound adage, “*Majus et minus non variant speciem—greater and less do not change the quality.*” The truth is, however, that the amount is not small. One million given at once to the Church of Ireland—another to the Churches of Scotland and England—£600,000 annually for church rates—tithes and tiends—annuity-tax, and church dues, of many names; is the amount of this list small, or even that proportion which falls upon Dissenters? Is it small in one year? Has it been small during the lapse of ages? Or does the injury lose its quality because unjust laws compel it? If Dissenters had to as great an amount, and for as long a term of years, thus taken for



their own purposes the property of Churchmen, what an outcry would have been raised against Dissenting rapacity! And what showers of ridicule would be justly poured on Dissenters, if they proceeded, in self-vindication, to divide the items contributed by the number of the contributors, and to palliate or deny all moral blame, on the ground of the smallness of the sum abstracted from each individual!

But Civil Establishments of Religion *injure Dissenters by other means*. They tend to create an extensive prejudice against Dissenters. The unrecognized is virtually a stigmatized church; the merely tolerated is virtually a dishonoured and branded party, a sect, which you must bear with, since you cannot get quit of it; and a conventional standard is formed by which the favoured are elevated, and the discountenanced depressed. The extent to which this practical wrong is done, the advantages taken of it, and the manner in which it is even gloried in by the more unworthy among our opponents, who need be told? The language of ignominy becomes the current language of the land; it finds its way into the legislature itself, where equity and impartiality should for ever bar its entrance; it is engrossed in the statute-book; and although by a wise and gracious law of providence, and by the blessing promised by God on the evils which he assigns to his children, it works for their good, the injury is not the less criminal in those who inflict, nor less wrongful to those who sustain it. Need I refer you to such well known phrases as these, which, I believe, are found among the written laws of our country—"The church and the sectaries—churches and conventicles—clergymen and ministers—those in holy orders, and those in pretended holy orders?"

Nor is this all. It is a fact in human nature that injury tends to its own increase—that if you injure a man once, there is a hazard of your repeating the wrong—and, especially, if you subject men to a course of injurious treatment, you will endeavour to justify your proceedings by allegations, perhaps hardly less injurious than the conduct they are intended to vindicate. If you treat a man ill, your consistency and your pride lead you to shew that he ought to be so treated. All manner of evil was alleged against the first Christians to justify the persecution of them on the part of their heathen oppressors. And what opprobrious allegations have not been brought against British Dissent-



ers, in vindication of the treatment to which they have been subjected? They are illiterate, and the church must be preserved, were it only for the literature of the land. They are fanatics or enthusiasts, and the church must be maintained, to repress that flood of folly with which they would otherwise inundate the country. They are weak and narrow-minded; and the church must be the sanctuary of whatever is commanding in intellect, and liberal in feeling. They are worse than useless for the religion of the land; for they only stand in the way of its evangelization by the holy enterprizes of churchmen, multiplying, or wishing to multiply, churches by scores and by hundreds; or they are actually formed into an impious league with the infidel and atheistical enemies of the religion of the Son of God, combined to overthrow the church which he bought with his blood; nay, they are held up to the special odium of the powers that be, as a set of restless and guilty agitators, who would turn this nation upside down, and would spread the frenzy of revolution, and the reign of anarchy, over this free and enlightened realm. Scarcely ever was any thing worse laid to the charge of the persecuted, in the days of Laud, and Lauderdale, and Jeffries,—or in the pagan era of Nero or Domitian. If there be truth in these allegations, which Churchmen affirm there is, what are the additional injuries which the Dissenters should not incur? And if the language of their ecclesiastical enemies were to gain general credence, and the spirit by which it is dictated to animate the rulers of this nation, who can doubt that overt violence would speedily follow—violence for which its authors would find ample justification in the crimes which they assiduously lay to our charge?

I cannot avoid remarking, *that the parties themselves are injured* by whom these establishments are created and maintained. We cannot be unjust without suffering for it. We cannot injure others, and be ourselves unscathed; and the injurious, for the most part, ultimately suffer more than the injured. In the formation of these institutions, church and state must be regarded as *socii criminis*, joint partakers in the injustice, and in the injuries which that injustice implies, or to which it gives origin. And if the history of what churches have suffered by the direct influence of their connection with the state, were recorded, from the days of Constantine down to this hour, in the real or virtual sur-

render of their independence to another head than Christ—in the accommodation they have been constrained to make to the humour of kings, and courts, and parliaments, in the construction of their creeds, and their rituals—in the temptations which, with lamentable success, they have held out to hypocrisy, by subscription to articles and canons which were disbelieved in the heart, and unacknowledged in the life—in the open dictation, or secret influence, or ruinous patronage on the part of the secular powers, to which they have willingly or unwillingly bent their necks—in the adulation, servility, and time-serving, on the part of those who, by the fear of God, should have known no other fear, and who ought to have remembered, that if they sought to please men they were not the servants of Christ—in breaking down, to a great extent, almost every distinction of a visible nature betwixt the holy and the profane, and throwing wide open the gate of the sanctuary for the admission of the impure—in the teaching of almost every variety of contradictory religious doctrine, within the same church; alas, what a picture should we have of the effects of these institutions on the church of Christ, and how dearly bought would her secular honours and emoluments appear to be! And, on the other hand, could we set before our minds, in the light of historic truth, a representation of what states have suffered from their unwise alliance with some party which they chose to call the church, and, which they delighted to load with wealth, to invest with honours, and to raise to power—could we have before us what poison ecclesiastical malignity has often instilled into the breasts of statesmen and kings—what cabals have been formed—what intrigues have been conducted—what counsels have been confounded—what thrones have been shaken or subverted—what national convulsions have been produced—what sanguinary wars have laid waste nations, by priestly influence, and for ecclesiastical objects,—we should come to the conclusion, that among all the causes of disquiet and suffering, which agitated and afflicted Europe has known for ages, church establishments have been the most fertile. And at this hour, it is a problem, apparently as far from solution as ever, how nations can be united under governments which, by common consent, shall be regarded as paternal and just, while those perilous institutions remain to separate man from his fellow. Perilous I presume to call

them, and perilous they must be ; for no state can be but in peril, under the reign of the righteous Ruler of the universe, which incorporates injustice and injury with its laws and its administration.

But I am persuaded that the chief view of the injury resulting from these institutions remains to be given. I have said that the worst view of the injustice which they include, is, that it is associated with the sacred cause of religion, and I make the same observation respecting their injurious influence. *They are injurious to religion itself.* That a divine religion never can be advantaged, but on the contrary must be injured, by human additions to its institutions, and especially if these institutions are at variance with its character, cannot be doubted. But if civil establishments of religion are unjust, their association with it must be injurious.—Besides, Christianity is to make progress in the world, not solely by the proposal of its doctrines in the written oracles, or by the living language of its friends and teachers, but also by the exhibition of the nature and tendency of these doctrines in the practical working of the system, in the plans and operations and lives of Christians. How do church establishments harmonize with this maxim ? So important is it that Christians walk in the truth, and love one another, that our Saviour refers to it as a powerful mean which he should himself employ for the general diffusion and reception of his religion. And no wonder ; for a more intelligible and attractive display of the nature of his religion cannot be afforded. But if the professed followers of Christ are artificially and forcibly divided into two classes, by the authority of human laws ; the one injuring, the other injured, the one allied to the state, the other disavowed by it ; can religion fail to suffer by such an exhibition of it ? On this ground, as well as on others, it seems probable, that no great or general revival of true religion can be expected in this country, till this wall of partition that separates Christian from Christian, be finally thrown down.—Nor is this all. Were the actual state of religion, within the only bodies recognized by law as the church in this land looked at, whether among the clergy or the people, at least in the chief establishment of the country, as this has been given, not by foes but by friends, it would be generally acknowledged that it is not such as to advance, but rather to repress, true religion.—Besides, the pleadings

set up for these institutions are injurious to the cause of religion. The ablest of our opponents allow that they form no part of Christianity; yet, they are contended for, as necessary to its very preservation and progress. And can it be honouring to a divine religion, to represent *that* to be necessary to its existence or prosperity, for which its own Author has made no provision? Does this representation impress the mind with the wisdom and foresight of the Author of Christianity?—Or, to take a more enlarged view of the case, is it honouring to Christianity to affirm, that unless the state uphold it, it will fall—that unless men are compelled by violence to support this religion, it will not be supported—and that while the friends of error in every form are sanguine, that if they are only let alone, and have fair play, they will maintain and promote their opinions, Christians alone should fear for the divine doctrines which they believe, unless the stern authority of human law, the coarse arm of human violence, should be called in to sustain them? Is there any species of acknowledged truth under heaven with which its friends would take such unceremonious liberty as this, or which would fail to suffer, if they did? When shall we hear the chemist say, unless the doctrines of chemistry are legislated for, they will be rejected, and the dreams of alchemy will supplant chemical discovery? When shall we hear the astronomer protesting, that he cannot get on without violence in his favour, and the doctrines of Newton and Kepler, and the discoveries of Herschel, will all be thrown aside as rubbish, and the nonsense of astrology, become all the rage, unless these doctrines are forcibly legislated for? And might not Christians well blush for themselves, when they weakly and tremblingly declare, that unless these doctrines which have descended from God, and which his own Son promulgated, the evidence of which is bright as the sun at noon-day, and for the triumph of which, the mighty power of their Author is guaranteed by holy covenant, shall all but perish from the earth, and a second heathenism gain the ascendancy, unless civil legislation lend its puny sanction in their favour, and unless human violence compel friend and foe to contribute to their support?

In these illustrations, I have been treating the subject, to a considerable extent, abstractly from its relation to the specialities of the establishments of this country. If we ad-



vert to some leading facts connected with these, we shall see our case considerably strengthened.

The mere fact, *that there are various religious establishments in the empire* deserves notice. The principle, so much contended for, that the true religion should be established by law, certainly supposes that there should be one establishment and not more, for assuredly truth is not many, but one; the religion of the Bible is one, not many. Upon the principle, that in the one empire, under the one legislature, we have two or three, we might have twenty or thirty. Upon the principle that you defer, in your establishment, not to the independent claims of truth, but to local opinions, habits and wishes, how many establishments might you set up! The injury to religion becomes palpable by this arrangement. The same state shews so little regard to the unity of divine truth, that it varies the system sanctioned, with the locality. Its establishing religion seems to have other reasons, and some other modifying principle to govern it, than regard to revealed truth, and to these high human interests for which that truth has been revealed. It acts as if religion were one thing in Scotland, another thing in England, and a third in the Dependencies. Is this arrangement honouring to divine truth, and to the universality of its obligation?

The Scottish establishment has this great disadvantage—*it is obnoxious to nearly the whole empire*. The English Dissenters, (the Presbyterians excepted, who are a small body in England,) dislike its government. The Episcopalians can hardly regard it as a church at all; having no duly ordained ministers—none who can properly confer ordination—no liturgy—nothing of the primitive, comely, dignified, apostolical order, by which the English hierarchy regards itself as distinguished. In these views, her Irish sister cordially harmonizes with the English church. I need not say how the Roman Catholics in Ireland are affected to the Scottish church. Here, some Dissenters object to her order, all of them to her patronage, most of them to her state-connection. Can it be regard to religion that induces the common state to extend its sanction and its resources to this small body, so generally disapproved of?

The English church is inconceivably more objectionable than the Scottish. There can be no doubt that the members of this church are now a minority in the empire.



Deduct those who unhappily acknowledge no church—deduct the English Dissenters of every name, the Methodists and the Roman Catholics—deduct the church of Scotland, that has abjured Prelacy, and is now in some quarters reviving the remembrance of these ancient deeds, (so excellent in their religious matter, so faulty for the spirit and the language of intolerance that distinguish them) in which Prelacy is denounced for extirpation—deduct the Scottish Dissenters, and the millions in Ireland unconnected with the Episcopalian church, and the English church will appear a very decided minority.\* Is it just that the whole empire should be implicated by its legislature, by its laws, by such enormous appropriation of public property, in the

\* When some modern defenders of the British establishments praise the covenants of our ancestors, and seem not unwilling to renew these deeds, it is worth while to ask, whether their southern friends, the members of the chief ecclesiastical establishment in the empire, can help regarding them as *sworn foes*—as enemies more *deadly* than even the members of voluntary churches? The following is the 2nd Article in the Solemn League. “That we shall in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour the *extirpation* of Popery, *Prelacy*, (*that is, church-government by Archbishops, Bishops, their Chancellors and Commissaries, Deans, Deans and Chapters, Archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical office-bearers depending on that hierarchy,*) superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; *lest we partake of other men’s sins*, and thereby, be in danger to receive of their plagues; and that the Lord may be one, and his name one, in the three kingdoms.” Will the Scottish church still call for this *extirpation of Prelacy*, “as the most powerful mean, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion, with perfect peace in his Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations?” *Act of Ass. Aug. 17, 1643.* Will the Scottish church at this day, true to the sentiments of our reformers in those days, *league together* for the extirpation of Episcopacy, as inconsistent, next to “Popery,” and even before “heresy, schism, and profaneness,” with “the true Protestant religion,” the “perfect peace” of the realm, and the “establishing his Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations?” We may denounce Episcopacy to be thus pernicious, but will they? Nor, if they will rigidly follow the example of the church in those days, need they be very scrupulous as to those with whom they *league*; for the Scottish Parliament enacted (July 15, 1644,) that “the League and Covenant shall have the full force and strength of perfect laws and acts of Parliament, and be observed by all his Majesty’s lieges.” If therefore the Scottish church get her wish, (for surely she can have no wish inconsistent with her own unrepealed Acts,) Episcopacy must be extirpated root and branch!

support of a hierarchy which the majority condemn?—But it is not by any merely local or hereditary antipathy that this powerful body is repudiated; it has sufficient characters, internal and external, to merit this rejection. With every allowance which truth dictates in its favour, its creed must be regarded as in some important points unsound and delusory. Few, I trust, in this audience, believe that every child on whom her baptismal water is sprinkled is regenerated, becomes a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. This wicked delusion that church has held and propagated from its institution to this hour; has been instilling it into the unsuspecting minds of the young, and into the hearts of careless, credulous, or superstitious parents; and thus has done what she could, by the influence of her sacerdotal authority, her imposing administration, and the blind reverence which she has so extensively enjoyed, to spread the blight of delusion, and the death of false security, over the minds of her millions, from generation to generation. This delusion is strengthened by the burial service, which teaches that all whom she accompanies by her ceremonial to the grave, are sent there in sure and certain hopes of a blessed resurrection. Who gave to that church the power she arrogates to “decree rites and ceremonies?” Where did she find her catalogue of officials, Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Prebends, Canons, Priests, and so forth; claiming for the whole the character of Apostolical? These inventions she ascribes to Christ, or his Apostles. Who taught this church to denominate a secular prince, be his personal character what it may, her supreme head on earth? Oh, daring insult to that Divine anointed King whom Jehovah hath set upon his holy hill, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, and who alone is Head of his body the church! After such usurpations, is it much to add, that this church has been intolerant and persecuting from her origin? The blood of saints is in her skirts. Her principles leading to persecution are unchanged; and although restrained by the spirit of the age, under a merciful Providence, even at this day, this church speaks as loftily as ever, and acts as wrongfully as is permitted to her, spoiling of their substance, and endeavouring to exclude from their standing within the church of the Redeemer, dissenting Christians of every name. Is it just—just to conscience—just

to the spiritual interests of the nation—just to the sacred cause of scriptural religion, that the whole empire should be implicated, by its laws and its public countenance, in the support of this erroneous, deluding, persecuting body?

I know well to what all this tends. I know it is no light charge to bring against any system, especially any religious system, that it is in its principle unjust, and in its working injurious. It is a grave matter to bring this charge against the legislation of our land. But truth must be spoken, cost what it may. I know the sentiments I have now uttered, and which I hold in common with the great body of Dissenters in Britain, imply, that in the principle, and in the working of the principle, of the Civil Establishments of religion in this land, there is, and there has been, great national guilt. I believe this, and I speak out my belief. I should be a timid and a dishonest man if I did not. We hear of many national sins, (and we cannot too deeply lay to heart the prevailing sins of our country) and, at least in times of national warfare and peril, we were accustomed to hear of what was called national fasting. But when will this course of national sin be acknowledged and deplored, that from the days of the profligate tyrant Henry—down by the haughty Elizabeth—and the hollow and arbitrary James—and his false and bloody royal offspring—aye, and down the Hanoverian line, even to the days of our present honoured Monarch, (to whom I desire to have a heart as loyal as the most favoured of his subjects,) there has flowed from the throne of this country, through the legislature, and in the channel of the laws, one continuous stream of injustice, which has poured itself over the whole dissenting body, and has not left unpolluted religion itself? Here is, indeed, national sin—here is cause for national mourning. Let the king weep—let the nobles humble themselves—let the prelates disrobe them of their sacerdotal attire, and for the mitre put dust upon their heads—let the people of the land mourn, until justice, eternal justice, get her due, establish the king's throne, and purify the national administration.

In this hasty sketch I should fail exceedingly did I not repeat here a caution, which, since these discussions began, I have often taken the liberty to suggest to my friends. *Because the system is unjust, we must not, in our turn, be*

*unjust to its defenders.* While we expose the system, we must spare its friends. To them I do not impute the conviction that the system is unjust. If they were persuaded of this, they would renounce it. Who knows not the influence of system over the best minds; how it often clouds the clearest intellect, and embitters the kindest and gentlest nature? When I think of a Knox, getting the Scottish legislature to decree that whosoever should say mass, or receive mass, or be present thereat, should, for the third offence, be put to death, a law, you know, the execution of which, at this day, would amount to the butchery of nearly all Ireland—when I think of the devotional Rutherford writing, with all imaginable animosity against the vile Independents, for their intolerable toleration of all religions—when I think of the heavenly, the seraphic Leighton, allying himself with as unjust and bloody a system, (Bishop Burnet himself being judge,) as religious tyranny ever attempted to impose on this country—when I think of such a man as Dr. M'Crie appealing to the decree of Nebuchadnezzar, as an authority, which decree appoints that those who should speak against the God of Heaven should be cut in pieces—above all, when I think of the two disciples of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, whose soul was gentle as a lamb, and who preached and breathed good will to men, requesting from him miraculous power, not to convert their enemies, but to burn them with fire, I see abundant cause for tolerance, and for kindness, and I blame the system more than the men. I say deal kindly with the men, but spare not the system. It is in this way alone that I can account for many manifestations on the part of our opponents; and very particularly for that one, otherwise unaccountable, which is at this moment exciting such general attention. To refer only to the case of the metropolis, what but system can so blind men to facts, as to induce them to call for additional compulsory accommodation and endowments, when in the Old Town alone, nine additional congregations, averaging the size of the existing ones, can be accommodated in the pews now empty? Or what but system can lead them to make the poor their plea, when of sittings costing two pounds a-year, there are only two in the hundred unoccupied, while of those costing two shillings a-year, eighty-eight in the hundred are empty?

As a prospective illustration of this effect of system, let



me suppose that at some future period, near or distant, the civil establishment of these churches were removed, would any one then, with the apparent injustice of the proposal to face, be found stout-hearted enough to call for its re-appointment? Suppose the dominant parties, which are by far the richer, supporting their own institutions, as the various denominations of Dissenters are now doing; and suppose a proposal then made to tax all Ireland for the benefit of a handful of rich Episcopalians; and to elevate into influence, and endow at the public charge, the Episcopalians in the South, and one class of the Presbyterians in the North of Great Britain; and to give to these favoured parties accommodation, at the national expense, not for all their own members only, but also for all the members of all other denominations whatever—we may confidently affirm that such a proposal would not obtain a hearing, on the ground of its injustice, not less than of its impolicy and its folly, and would as certainly be repudiated by the Commons, and possibly even by the Peers of England, as a proposal to abolish our mixed government, and to substitute the feudal system in its place \*.

\* The argument from the injustice of Religious Establishments is plainly making its way, with great rapidity, among the members of the Established Churches themselves. There is something in their breasts that readily responds to our appeals. They begin to feel in this way—“Would we deem it just were the Dissenters to possess such a monopoly as we have, particularly if they were, as we are, the richer party? If the rest of the nation support their own religious institutions, without leaning on us, is it not just that we should support our’s without leaning on them? Is it right that they should be forced to support both their own and our’s? Can we continue to sanction this, and be just to our brethren, to our churches, or to ourselves? Can the Almighty regard such exactions with favour?”—Indications of these sentiments appear everywhere. In the disputes respecting the *church accommodation scheme*, in which, so much to their honour, multitudes of Churchmen have taken part with Dissenters, the injustice of the proposal has been as loudly reprobated by them as by us. In English movements respecting church rates, honest Episcopalians, in great masses, have strongly expressed their virtuous indignation that Dissenters should be taxed for the support of Episcopalian worship. And who has not observed that in the recent discussions in the House of Commons on the Irish Church, the same sentiments have been expressed by the majority of that assembly? I do not refer to the important principle sanctioned by the decision of the House, that church property is national property, although it is something to have that point ruled by the authority of the Commons; nor to the general exposure of the



Irish Church, as not less hateful to the nation on which it is imposed, than Episcopacy was to our Scottish ancestors; but to the constant assertion *of the injustice* of burdening Ireland with a church from which few of her people derive any advantage—a charge which, it is plain, *as really*, if not as glaringly, applies to the other Establishments, as to the Irish. The subject is only beginning to attract national attention; but it only requires to be dispassionately thought of, (and *that thought*, events existing and prospective cannot but compel) and the essential injustice of the system will flash with the power of lightning on the minds of the British people; the *vox Dei* will become the *vox populi*; and the highest in the land will be forced to obey it. The sooner the better. Churchmen may attempt to persuade us that by virtue of these Establishments the nation is Christian; but, while they stand, we never, I fear, can claim the character of a “righteous nation.”



LECTURE FIFTH:  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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ON CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF CHRIS-  
TIANITY, AS IMPEACHING ITS  
INTRINSIC EFFICIENCY.

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DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 31st, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,  
JOHN-STREET.

BY THE REV. DAVID KING.

THIRD THOUSAND.

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## LECTURE V.

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THE Lecturers by whom I have been preceded, have already introduced the subject under discussion, and shown the connexion of Church and State to be unscriptural, unjust, and injurious. It now falls to me to vindicate the Gospel from the suspicion of requiring inadmissible assistance. In treating of this branch of the argument, I shall endeavour to show—

I. That the Civil Establishment of Christianity charges it with inefficiency; and

II. That the charge is altogether unfounded.

My first position is—That the Civil Establishment of Christianity charges it with inefficiency. The incorporation of the Church with the State has sometimes, indeed, received from its friends explanations and defences, which, if admitted, go far to obviate this objection. It has been averred that a State Endowment is not an essential constituent of a National Church; that though it were withdrawn, the chartered Churches of these realms would still subsist, and be more prosperous than ever; and that the Civil Establishment of Religion is, on the whole, to be vindicated rather as due from the magistrate, than necessary for the Gospel. These views of the cause which we combat, will be found in the speeches and writings of some of its ablest supporters. And, assuredly, if the Church be so very independent as they allege, and receive State assistance as a mark of respect, which could have been well enough dispensed with, though very becoming in the respectful statesman, none can impute an acknowledgment of weakness to such a representation of the question. But if this ground is taken, let it be maintained, and not exchanged for contrary positions as convenience may require. Let it be distinctly understood that



Establishments are held to be right, because it is conceived a duty in the ruler to afford help where it is not needed,—where it can be of no service,—and where its only effect is to impair the prosperity of the religion of Jesus. Let us hear no more, likewise, about the Highlands and other needy portions of our country, as justifying State interposition; for, according to this theory of our opponents, they have no necessities which the Church cannot as well meet by its own resources, as by the amicable alliance of earthly governments. That our brethren take their stand on this footing, is all fair and reasonable; and it is withal so like our own, as to present cause for friendly congratulation rather than hostile conflict. We may still differ a little about the duty of the magistrate doing what is confessedly useless, and even hurtful; but about the innate stability of the Church we are, in this case, at one; and so soon as the ruler shall be persuaded to quit, as ruler, the courts of the Temple, then, since we shall mutually account no damage to have been sustained, our agreement will be perfected.

It is to be lamented, however, that this moderate ground is not generally or consistently occupied by Churchmen. The calm statement of magisterial duty is exchanged for the timid cry of ecclesiastical danger. The ruin of religion, and the prevalence of heresy, infidelity, and crime, are despairingly anticipated, as the inevitable results of withdrawing civil aid, and entrusting the Church to its inherent energies. Such gloomy forebodings are most lamentable, whether well or ill grounded. If the Gospel be so weak and so dependent for its endurance on an arm of flesh, as these alarming apprehensions suppose, then we have to mourn its weakness and dependence, and hide our heads from the contempt of the scorner. But if the Gospel be not so feeble and ineffective; if it can look with dauntless courage from its own walls and battlements on a combined and hostile world; if it can not only maintain the defensive, but send forth its armies and repel its assailants, and plant its banners on their conquered countries;—then how calamitous is it that the friends of Zion should so depreciate its strength, and bring dishonour upon its Lord, and distress upon themselves, by quaking and wailing for imaginary perils.

To profess belief in the Gospel, and yet pronounce it unequal to its ends, is not very reasonable or pleasant; and the abettors of Establishments try to escape from the dilemma,

by averring that the Gospel has no efficiency which supersedes the use of means, and by pleading for civil aid as a part of its appropriate instrumentality.

To this reply, as being the only one conceivable, I propose giving all manner of dutiful consideration.

And I set out with readily conceding that the religion of Christ does not dispense with means, but, on the contrary, requires their use as indispensable to personal profiting and general usefulness in every province of faith and practice. But surely no person of any sense or conscience will regard this admission as deciding the controversy. The character of the means proposed is still subject of debate. A country cannot be defended from invaders without means of defence; but who will deny that help might be resorted to which would be indicative of weakness; as, for example, the alliance of foreign powers, and still more of hostile powers, obtained by humiliating petitions and mercenary proffers. Such means would surely not be comparable for a moment to the native prowess and resources of the country itself. Sparta might have repelled the haughty Xerxes by entering into league with potent kingdoms; but how much did it exalt the fame of her glory, that her own three hundred sons preserved her independence, and baffled, at Thermopylæ, invading millions. The whole question turns, then, on the nature of the aid to which we betake ourselves. And a little reflection will be sufficient, I think, to convince a candid inquirer that the State assistance called in by National Churches, is exactly of the hostile character above supposed, and consequently disparaging to the native independence and power of the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Let us inspect the State assessing for the church, the community assessed, and finally, the penalties of law enforcing assessment. These present all the stages of Legislative interposition, and all of them we embrace in one condemnatory indictment.

First in order is the State; and it is needless to look beyond our own, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. It goes by the name of a Christian State, but we must not be misled by courteous terms. Is any security provided that its members shall be Christians? Jews, it is true, are excluded, but free admission is afforded to Socinians, and Infidels, and Papists, and all those reviled classes who are held to pollute us by participation in our sentiments. In

what sense, then, do such an indiscriminate confederation constitute a Christian magistracy. We may be told that they should be Christians; but this evasion is pitiful. See how it would apply in any other case. Suppose we should collect at random a heterogeneous mob, comprising the sober and the sensual, the decent and the abandoned, would we be justified in calling this mongrel throng a Christian Church, because all of them should be Christians? No: it is clear as day, that before any association of persons, in whatever capacity they may be associated, can be considered Christian, they must enter through some ordeal which is understood at least to test their Christianity. But our Monarchical throne and Parliamentary houses have no such discriminating gateways; for neither gross ignorance, nor gross error, nor gross immorality, would exclude any from their lofty seats. In what sense, then, I again ask, are high places Christian, which are equally open to the pious and the profane, to him that sweareth and him that feareth an oath.

We may be told it is a pity that tests are not instituted, and a sore calamity that some tests which did exist have been abolished. As much of the controversy hinges on this point, allow me to request for it, though it be not very fascinating, a minute's attention. I observe, then, that if tests are employed, they should, so far as possible, be sufficient for their ends. This remark partakes of a truism, its justice is so apparent. How can it be controverted that tests, which are engaged for the purpose of making a State Christian, should be such as may prove those tested to be Christians in the judgment of enlightened charity. A criterion, dividing, not between the righteous and the wicked, but between one grade of the wicked and another, and pronouncing this class of sinners fit members, and that class of sinners unfit members of a Christian State, is a mere figment, delusive and destructive in itself, and unsupported by a syllable of revelation. Where tests, therefore, are employed to Christianize States, they should be such as we acknowledge, needful in other cases to establish Christian faith and character; and so our Monarchs, and Barons, and Commoners, will all pass through the same ordeal to their magisterial seats, by which persons, in well disciplined churches, approach to the institution of the Lord's Supper. This demand of all civil posts for accredited saints, as the only lawful statesmen will overturn every Government in Europe; and was, indeed,

the very demand, which, at one period of the Reformation, created confusion, and rebellion, and bloodshed, in Germany. Yet there is no resting place short of this revolutionary extreme, if religious tests are prefixed to civil office. But, I observe farther, that we are presently speaking not to fancies, but to facts—to existing substantial realities. The British Constitution imposes no such tests, nor tests deserving the name of any description; and our legislators consequently are, or may be, just as fair a specimen of the world as any group of men, any where and any how assembled. And if then, the love of the world be enmity with God, if the love of the world be so incompatible with the love of the Father that they cannot co-exist, I appeal to every honourable mind, whether Christianity, without confessing itself reduced to the last shifts of weakness, can stretch an imploring arm to these same wordly legislators, and cry out in plaintive misery, O save us—we perish!

Having surveyed the State assessing, we look now at the community assessed, for the church. And this province of the argument is so independent of the preceding, that in discussing it we may allow the former reasoning to go for nothing. Let it now be supposed then, that legislators are in every respect what they should be; and that this has been ascertained by some legitimate indications of Christian proficiency. Still, the abettors of Establishments do not escape the serious charge of impugning the sufficiency of the Gospel. It is not from these statesmen themselves that the legal provision for the Church is exacted, but from the commonwealth at large. They are simply the medium of access to the general community. To say, then, that the Church requires the aid of the State, is to say, that it requires the aid of the body politic. Nay, more, it cannot require the statesman's aid to collect money that would be contributed at any rate; so that the magistrate can be needed only to extort supplies from the reluctant. To need the ruler, then, is to need the infidel and sensualist whom he compels. To such classes Churchmen come through governors, and say, we must have your help, or we are undone. We would like you, no doubt, to believe our doctrines; and if you can make up your mind to that, good and well. But, if you hesitate about adopting, there must, at all events, be no hesitation in supporting them; for, if you withdraw your support they will sink, and there will be shortly no such doctrines in the land to be believed. The



scoffer, it may be supposed, jeers and asks—Is this your machinery for conversion? Is it thus you expect to convince me? Would you have me believe your creed for its imbecility? Can I not do without a faith that cannot do without the unbeliever; and must I depend on a godliness which depends on my gain, even while that gain bears for its inscription the wages of iniquity? It must be so, is the ignominious reply; we have no alternative; our religion cannot dispense with your constrained and scornful pittances. O! What religion is it that is brought so low? Is it, can it be the religion of Jesus, of Him who died the more signally to conquer death, and descended into the grave to show how easily he could spoil it for ever? High as party feeling now runs, and strongly as it inclines to its party views, I cannot resist the conviction, that if the ministers and members of our National Churches would still scan with some composure, the dependence they assign to the religion of Jesus, many of them would forbear to inflict on Him this second humiliation. If, instead of terminating their view in a supposed pious magistrate, about whom they are ever desecrating, they would look beyond the magistrate of whatever description, to the motley classes, whose succour he extorts, I should think they would recoil from casting Zion's maintenance on her haters, and denounce as false and calumnious, her alleged need of their assistance.

Having surveyed the State assessing, and the community assessed, and found the aid of both affronting to the Church, let us look finally at the penalties of law enforcing assessment. These furnish the Church, as Saul did David, with armour and a coat of mail; and happy were it, if the former could say, as did the latter, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them. The Church has proved them; and hence is it smitten and discomfited before the Philistines. A mind which has learned at the feet of Jesus, and inhaled the meekness and gentleness of the Prince of Peace, revolts from the allegation of using arms in his service; and is ready, from an impression of its enormity, to discredit and deny its truth. But no discredit or denial amounts to disproof; and it remains, after all, a certain matter of fact, that the sword holds a principal place among the instrumentality of our Establishments. Of course, the sword is expressive generally of those pains and penalties which the magistrate is empowered



to inflict; and by them, and them only, does he elicit that provision for the Church which is solicited at his hands.

To say that the minister does not coerce personally, is a miserable shelter. The magistrate engages the bailiff; but who engages the magistrate? In whose service does he act? All is for the Church, and with its sanction, and under its auspices; and how then, with the semblance of fairness, can it disclaim the solemn responsibility? This much, at least, is perfectly obvious, that if Established Protestantism be not accountable for its judicial inflictions, neither was Established Popery for its guilty slaughters; for it shed the blood of saints, by handing them over to the secular power, to whose tender mercies it insultingly recommended them.

But the reply will be forthcoming—there are no such scenes now. Are there not? It is true, where payment is not refused, goods are not spoiled, and blood is not shed; and merciless, indeed, is the despotism that needlessly tortures unresisting victims. But let any conscientiously decline to maintain a dominant faith, from a conviction of its untruth; and then the imprisonments of Scotland, and the slaughters of Ireland, sufficiently disclose and expound the last appeal of our National Churches. But still this representation may be held to be extreme. Whatever may be the case of certain localities, surely, it may be urged, the collection of tithes or teinds is commonly peaceable, and has no affinity to the battle of the warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood! So the pious members of Establishments think, and in this persuasion uphold the system. But let me remind them, that prevailing quiet does not always argue the absence of violence. Suppose that a country yields despairingly to an invading foe without fighting at all, is it not as truly, in that case, subjugated by arms, as if conflicting hosts had met, and thousands fallen. To change the figure, is the slave never driven by the lash, unless when it is applied to his person; and are his exertions independent and free, when he works merely from observing a cart-whip in the hands of the driver? Discussion on a point so plain, is really waste speaking. It may be easily brought to an issue. If an Established Church does not rest on pains and penalties, then let them be abolished, for non essentials can be dispensed with. But if it cannot surrender them, if their extinction would be its extinction, then, we call on Churchmen, as men of uprightness, to own at once their obligations

to the military. Do not at once retain lethal weapons and disavow them. No means should be engaged which require such equivocation; and seeing that violence is necessary to State Churches, the necessity should be ingenuously confessed, and courageously advocated. With the accoutrements of the warrior, our opponents will then display something of his courage. But there is scarcely one element of Establishments for which their abettors thus unflinchingly declare. Instead of avowing and vindicating their own articles of belief, they are more anxious to appear in possession of ours; and many a laboured attempt have they made to show that their practices embody our principles. They scruple, for example, to admit that magistrates interfere with religion in deciding between creeds, and stamping law on the decision; and unite with us in condemning civico-ecclesiastical interference. They will not allow that civil assessments for a Church involve the aid of compulsion; and pronounce the Church of Scotland wholly Voluntary in her maintenance. They cannot concede that an endowed Church derives one penny from Dissenters, however largely they are taxed for its support; and while the fingers of the tax-gatherer are in our pockets, proclaim and reiterate in our ears, that they subsist like ourselves on their own exclusive finances, and that their ecclesiastical fabrics and worship cost us nothing. And, in short, speaking more immediately to the point in hand, they deny that ultimate dependence on arms, at all implicates in their use, and pretend to no less abhorrence than ourselves of all resorts to violence in the service of religion. All these paradoxes have been put forth to obtain for Established, the favour of unestablished Churches. But the attempt is as futile as it is self-condemnatory. To a mind retaining the least power of impartial discernment, such strained assumption of liberal maxims in upholding illiberal immunities, can have no effect, except in disclosing a felt, though unconfessed weakness in the system so defended. When strong and tenable ground is occupied, there is no need for disclaiming its occupancy, and urging ludicrous pretensions to an enemy's position. Meanwhile, we must account it a palpable truism, that a revenue is exacted by the sword, which is exacted by its influence; and we put it, most solemnly put it, to the conscience of all engaging civil penalties in promotion of religious objects, whether they can repeat with unmisgiving minds the Apostolic averment,—“The weapons of our warfare

are not carnal." Scorn our interdict as you may; but O, despise not him that speaketh to you from heaven, and who is even now, if ye will only hear his voice, proclaiming over your belligerent discipleship—"Put up thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

From these illustrations, then, it appears that State alliance is, throughout, foreign and hostile to the constitution of the Church; and hence, in all its stages, through rulers, subjects, and penalties, disparaging to the essential efficiency of the Gospel of Christ. That civil aid is a defence, I care not to disprove. It is enough for me that its walls are not salvation, and its gates are not praise; and when you rear such protection around Zion, and tell me, This is her security,—I reply, in the indignant language of the Prophet, "Take away her battlements, for they are not the Lord's."

That this charge of inadequacy is preferred by Establishments against Christianity, I must now hold as proved. And I proceed to show, under the Second Division of my subject, that the charge is unjust—that the Gospel has no such impotency; but possesses, on the contrary, all requisite powers for the accomplishment of its purposes.

In applying myself to this part of my work, I really cannot help feeling as if it were superfluous. Prove the adequacy of Christianity to Christians!—Surely the task might be spared me. Were I debating with the idolater or infidel, I might deem it reasonable to assert and establish the sufficiency of the Gospel; and, in reply to his cavils, give him a reason for the hope that is in me. But when reasoning with opponents whom I am much more inclined to call brethren, many of whom I rejoice to consider partakers of like precious faith with us, I really feel, when summoned by them to show the Gospel equal to its exigencies, as if the summons were a piece of friendly pleasantry,—as if with jocular gravity they were asking a demonstration that the sun can dissipate the shades of the night, or the ocean bear such gallant ships as float in thousands on its waters. When they pronounce the Church dependent on secular power, and implore its enemies to preserve it from ruin, I feel as if creation were pronounced in peril, and props were gathered to support the heavens, or cords to fasten the foundations of the earth. If the figure fail, it is from weakness; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Church is the avowed care of Him,

one word of whose sayings shall not pass away. As proof, however, is demanded, let it be granted; and I shall be glad if I succeed in one instance in dispelling a sceptical cowardly alarm, though I should fail of commanding entire conviction. I shall be glad if any troubled saint in this assembly, alarmed at the agitation of the times, and fearing for the ark of God, shall hear in the succeeding illustrations the seasonable call, "Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!" In proof, then, of the efficiency of the Gospel, I adduce—

First, *The Character of its Doctrines*.—These doctrines are true, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. Once more I must remind you, that I am not arguing with unbelievers. To set out with the assumption, in contending with them, that Christianity is true, would be taking for granted what required to be proved. But the truth of the Gospel is ceded by our brethren; and as respects them, consequently we are quite free to argue from its truth. In truth, then, I maintain, is safety. Where opinion is false, it may be exploded; and when its falsity is understood in high quarters, it may be expedient, in the probable anticipation of argument failing, to hold force in reserve; but those shifts and reserves are not needed in defence of truth, for its fortresses are impregnable. It admits, it courts, it demands inquiry; and if it may defy the infidel's scrutiny, I humbly think it may dispense with his services. What obstructions has not truth surmounted. The astronomical system of Copernicus and Galileo was opposed by virulent and protracted persecution; but it was true, and it prevailed. The enlightened maxims of Socrates occasioned his cruel death, but they were true; and though he died, they live. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was ridiculed by his contemporaries; but it was true, and now its acceptance is universal. And though, then, Christianity be violently resisted, yet, if it be true, as we believe it is, it also will verify the maxim—"Great is truth, and it shall prevail."

Perhaps it may be replied, that religion differs in this respect from literature and science. But do we not witness the reverse in facts? Do we not see that even in its corrupted forms the encumbered truths are more powerful to uphold than the encumbering errors to suppress. Observe, for example, Popery in Ireland. It is there subsisting, it is there advancing; and will Churchmen, with all their ab-



horrence of Papists, cede to them the position, that Christ is distinguishable from Anti-Christ, in being weaker and more destructible? If asked by a Roman Catholic wherein their faith differs from his, will they specify, as one of the more obvious features of difference—Yours can survive and flourish amid contempt, and discountenance, and exaction, and all the evils of misgovernment for centuries; but ours has no such inherent vitality; ours is upheld by royal favour,—while the ruler smiles on it, it flourishes; and if, peradventure, he should frown upon it, it would instantly wither!

But I argue not only from the truth of our holy faith abstractly considered, I argue also and specially from the character of its truths. Tenets that are quite accurate, may be so trivial as to be powerless—as to supply no potent stimulus to action. But such are not the doctrines of the cross. Their magnitude and importance transcend all expression and conception. Their representations of sin and the perdition it incurs—of the blood of Christ, and the blessings it procures, of the promised spirit and the renovation he effects, all these fill earth and heaven, time and eternity, with their magnificence. And I request your attention while I unequivocally state it as my conviction, that we cannot conceive of these doctrines being believed, and yet known duties accruing from them fundamentally or habitually neglected. If a man does not believe them, then of course they are pointless to him as untruth; or if a man does believe them, but does not perceive that they require this or that service, then of course he will not obey when he does not suppose himself commanded. But, to say that a man may have faith in these doctrines, and knowledge of his consequent duties—to say, for example, that a man may believe in the Son of God having loved him and given himself for him, and yet refuse, at the request of this Saviour, to sacrifice a little substance for maintaining the very ordinances which convey these tidings, the supposition seems to me intuitively monstrous—I cannot help repudiating it as a self-evident absurdity. These remarks are in the first person, because I have no right to judge the mental impression of another. But I entreat you to judge for yourselves—to survey personally the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, and say if you can conceive of a person truly receiving such a testimony, and yet refusing a reason-



able sacrifice enjoined by this same testimony for its maintenance and extension. On such conduct, you will observe, I am not remarking as undutiful merely, but as impossible; for there is a connection between faith and faithfulness, just as close and indissoluble as there is between the sun in the heavens and the light which he sheds on encircling planets. Our ministerial brethren of the Establishment are accustomed, like ourselves, to contend, in their discourses, and especially in their preparatory Sacramental addresses, called Fencings, that habitual neglect of any known duty disproves Christian profession. Now, surely they will admit, that if state aid were withdrawn, it would be the duty of private Christians to uphold the church rather than allow it to go down; and if then the duty were declined, it would prove, by their own showing, that their church members are no Christians at all. But this would not be the result. A great portion of the members of the Established Church are, we believe, true followers of the Lamb, and would cheerfully follow him in this, as in every province of duty, if you would only give them the opportunity. I hold, then, the doctrines of Christianity to be such that when sincerely believed they are and cannot but be sufficient to secure their maintenance.

Ia proof of the efficiency of the gospel, I adduce—

Secondly, *its own explicit claims*. To an unbeliever its testimony in its own behalf is unconvincing, but with Christian brethren it should be decisive. I aver, then, that the gospel does not acknowledge weakness, but asserts its possession of irresistible strength. In evidence, I adduce the language of inspiration. “I am not,” says Paul, Rom. i. 16, “ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.” Observe this attestation. The gospel is the power of God: and what is his power? It is omnipotence. Therefore did the apostle of the Gentiles account it his glory and not his disgrace. Could it have been shown him that any truly believed it, and yet remained unreformed; that it failed, for example, to subdue in the believer indifference to fellow-men, or that mean and sordid avarice which would deny them needful instruction, then would he have blushed for his faith. But the contrary was the case. The gospel, he knew, could persuade its recipients to discharge any, and every duty, and

therefore he was not, and therefore we are not, ashamed of its profession.

Again, he observes, in another Epistle, (1 Cor. i. 23,) "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." The application of these verses to the subject in hand is obvious. We are asked how people can be induced to support and extend the gospel? We answer, by preaching to them *Christ crucified*. Instruct them faithfully in the doctrines and duties of the Cross, and they will communicate the knowledge of Christ to the ends of the earth. On this averment some may fall as on a *stumbling block*, and some may deride and cry *foolishness*. But to all such cavils we oppose the reply—These means cannot fail through weakness, for in the emphatic and oft repeated expressions of the apostle they are the *power of God*, and we dare the professed disciples of Christ to exalt above his power the might of Princes. Is it asked wherein the potency of this preaching lies, that may enable it to produce free offerings, and is it averred that to all appearance it is only weakness? I reply, it will nevertheless prevail, "Because," (in the subjoined language of the apostle,) "the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man." The verses which succeed are so important in this connexion, that I request for them your especial attention. "But God," (says the apostle, verses 27—29,) "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are. That no flesh should glory in his presence."

Look at the instrumentality of which the divine choice is here alleged, and to which ultimate triumph is here promised, and say, in candour, whether you realize it most in the offerings of voluntary churches or in the machinery of state-favoured establishments? Whether, as respects the world, is wisdom most predicated of the voluntary saint or the imperial statesman? Which is pronounced weak and which mighty? Which is despised? Which is overlooked

in legislative privilege among things that are not? And whether, by the success of the one or the other would the end be best secured, "that no flesh should glory in his presence?" I propose these questions, but I do not answer them. The answers presents themselves with a clearness which cannot be aided by illustration. Say not that humble means were then employed for want of nobler, and till loftier aid should present itself—*God hath chosen them*, and to this hour his choice is unrevoked. Meanwhile, with these inspired statements before me, I can listen with indifference, yea with delight, to the fashionable aspersions cast upon our system. We are assailed by the very terms of reproach which the apostle counted it all joy to incur. Urge them then against us. Call our church polity *foolish*. Descant on the *weakness* of the voluntary principle. Denounce casting ministers on its maintenance, and protest that such a support for clergymen is *base*. *Despise* the proposal. Exhibit your statistics for your allied state, and show us that from these we are excluded with *things that are not*. Such accusation may gratify the accusers, but in all this lordly disdain we discern the selection of God and the insignia of victory.

Speaking elsewhere (2 Cor. iv. 7,) of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the same apostle says,—  
 "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God and not of us." I may be told this passage refers to preaching, which God has confessedly devolved on weak imperfect men. I reply, that though suggested by a particular instance, (and this remark applies also to the passages already considered,) the language of the apostle is general, and enunciates obviously general principles. "He has put the treasure in earthen vessels." No, say churchmen, not in all the process of conveyance. At one stage these are too weak to be trusted, and too vile to be honoured. A Christian ministry may be trusted to preach, but not Christian churches to maintain them. The all-important article of pastoral support we must assign to vessels stronger and more splendid—to the power of the state and the parade of royalty. Thus are the means changed; and thus also is the end defeated, for how can the power appear any longer to be of God and not of man? How can the terrors of civil law bespeak the excellence or promote the praise of that divine faith which they are engaged to

succour under the insulting allegation that it would perish without them? O cast away these gaudy utensils. Restore, we entreat you, the misplaced treasure to its original and appointed *earthen vessels*. Pride and unbelief will vociferate—Ruin. These vessels will never do. They are utter frailty and baseness. They are; but so much the more will their preservation of the true riches prove the excellency of the power to be of God and not of us; and again will the ever-needed exhortation be enforced,—He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

I might cite such passages from almost every page, and certainly from every book of the New Testament. But I shall adduce only one more,—“Though we walk,” says Paul, (2d Cor. x. 3,) “in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” On the explicit disclaimer of carnal weapons by the Apostle in these verses I have already remarked. What I wish you to observe now, is, his assigned reason for rejecting them and preferring the spiritual. The carnal are now adopted by churchmen as alone efficacious—Paul disowned them for their feebleness. The spiritual are now relinquished by churchmen for their inefficacy: faith, and love, and such principles, are pronounced by them no security for the church—Paul chose them for their power. He preferred them to the bow and the arrow, the sword and the shield, as being immeasurably mightier, not indeed in themselves, but through God, to the utter demolition of all possible obstructions. All nameable difficulties he includes within the sure conquest of this divine armour. Point you to the dark desolate places of our land, and ask how these are to be supplied? What are they, I respond, but satan’s *strongholds*? Speak you of the ungodliness and regardlessness of the people as precluding all demand for religious instruction? What are these, I ask, but “things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ.” The Apostle’s language has no meaning, if not applicable to such barriers, and with all consideration, I add, that it has no truth, if the spiritual power of the gospel be not adequate to their total subversion. True, the ignorant

may not request or provide instructors, but to say that the gospel will not induce believers to make that moderate sacrifice which, without intrenching on the necessities, or almost the comforts of life, will enable them to send and to sustain the messengers of peace, is to pronounce the plaudits of the Apostle extravagant panegyric, and nothing better than great swelling words of vanity. But I will believe the Apostle of our faith, and not its faint-hearted adherents. I will believe that the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit, can, without the aid of human law, outrival its achievements, and bring provinces under subjection which set its authority at defiance.

In support of the efficacy of the gospel, I adduce—

Thirdly, the evidence of facts. Here I intended to consider at some length the glorious conquests of a free-will Christianity in the primitive age—its acknowledged preservation of sound doctrine and worship in the valleys of Piedmont during the dark ages—its signal overthrow of the papal establishment in different nations of Europe at the period of the reformation, and more lately, its rapid supply of the American states with the ordinances of Christianity. I find, however, that I cannot review these, however cursorily, and I pass from them with the less reluctance, that I entertain hopes of another lecturer discussing them separately and more satisfactorily at a subsequent stage of the course.

Meanwhile, I specify the testimony of experience only where it is most disputed, namely, in our own country; and after all that has been urged to the contrary, I hold that the ecclesiastical condition of Scotland makes out a triumphant case for the voluntary principle. When so much is written and published about the deficiency of church accommodation, the subjoined tabular statement, drawn up at my request by my esteemed friend, Mr. Elles of Saltcoats, will be heard with interest.\*

(1.) “ The following calculation will show that though there were no Dissenters in Scotland, there is no want of ministers, if there was a fair distribution of them :—

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\* This communication was not received in time to be introduced in the lecture as delivered in Glasgow.



In 1831, the population of Scotland was,	2,365,807
Suppose that to this date the increase has been,	134,193

The total amount at present is,	2,500,000
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Now, there are at present in Scotland, inclusive of those admitted into the number last year by the deed of the General Assembly, Parish Ministers,	1,007
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Add those connected with chapels; but which, for some reason, of which I am ignorant, are not put down under the respective Presbyteries where they are situated,	18
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Add Collegiate Churches,	30
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Missionaries on Royal Bounty,	34
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Do. employed by Society for promoting Christian Knowledge,	8
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1,097

Add for Chapels in progress of erection, and which are likely soon to have Ministers, (very moderate,)	3
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1,100

Now, this will give one minister in connection with the Established Church for every 2,272 of the actual population. In the Assembly's circular, Church accommodation is required for the half of the population; and in this proportion there is one minister for every 1,136 persons. But Dr. Cleland says that two-thirds of the population above 12 years of age is in proportion to the whole as 100 to 214. Accordingly, legal accommodation is required only for 1,157,408—and at this rate there is a minister for every 1,052 persons for whom the law appoints accommodation to be made.

(2.) The following shows the proportion of Presbyterian Ministers to the actual population and legal accommodation:—

Established Ministers,	1,100
United Secession, (in Scotland,)	319
Reformed Synod,	33
Original Burgher Synod, (in Scotland,)	46
Relief Synod, Do.	101
Original Seceders,	33

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Ministers,	1,632
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This is one Presbyterian Minister to every 1,532 of actual—and one for every 710—of the population to be legally accommodated.

(3.) The following shows the proportion of Ministers of all denominations to the actual population—and to the number for whom accommodation is legally required:—

Established Ministers,	.	.	.	.	.	1,100
Presbyterian Dissenters,	.	.	.	.	.	532
Congregational Union,	.	.	.	.	.	84
Episcopalian,	.	.	.	.	.	75
Baptists, (not mentioned in the Almanacs,) but say	.	.	.	.	.	30
Methodists, and other denominations, say	.	.	.	.	.	50
						<hr/>
Total of Protestant Ministers,	.	.	.	.	.	1,871

Now, this is one Protestant Minister to every 1,336 of the actual population—and one for every 619 persons that the law says church accommodation should be provided for; and I believe you will admit that my estimate of those bodies of professing Christians, at whose numbers I have guessed, as I have no means of ascertaining their real number, is considerably below the truth. My authority for the other numbers is the County Almanack for this year. It gives 50 Catholic Ministers and Congregations—and of course this shows that the provision is still greater. I may remark, that I have not in these calculations taken into account any assistants in parishes, of which there are some regularly employed and provided for, such as St. Ninian's; nor have I included many of our stations, such as those in the Glasgow Presbytery, where we have a number of preachers regularly labouring."

Whatever increase of accommodation these computations show is almost wholly to be ascribed to voluntary benevolence. Dr. Chalmers, I think, observes somewhere, that owing to the amalgamation of parishes, two having in many instances been blended into one, they are not more numerous now than at their original division—setting aside the fact that the late chapels of ease, though now parish churches, are still upheld by voluntary contribution. In the establishment, then, there has been stagnation, if not reduction—to the voluntary principle belongs all the praise of progression. But let us examine the representations and pleadings of our establishment brethren.

The Committee of the General Assembly own, in their circular, that "there might be no reason for their present application to government, were it safe to let matters proceed spontaneously." "Could the supply," say they, "of

the enormous deficiency be confined to the energies and resources of the Voluntary system, any extension of the Establishment might be unnecessary and uncalled for. But the contrary," they allege, "is the lesson and the demonstration of all experience." They proceed to stigmatize the Voluntary system for "its own inherent and essential feebleness," and dissuade the community from a delusive "confidence in its sufficiency to accomplish that which it is unable for." And all this, they appropriately conclude by the assertion, "A people left to its operation alone will perish for lack of knowledge." Now, what is the principle that is so disparaged? It is not, you must observe, our Voluntary Church Societies. Whether our cause would have progressed better with or without these associations, is disputed by its friends. But it is not the mode of defending the principle:—it is the principle itself which churchmen charge with impotency. And what is the Voluntary principle? It is the power of the Gospel to influence the will—to realize its own promise, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The contemned principle is nothing else and nothing less than "the power, which," in the language of an apostle, "worketh in us," and according to which, he assures us, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." This is the principle now branded, I do not say designedly, but inconsiderately, with inherent essential feebleness; and which, instead of getting credit for doing exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, is accused of doing exceedingly little, beneath all we can ask or think; so that no terms of contempt can be too contemptuous to express its incompetency. A people left to it, are left, we are told, to perdition: to what worse alternative could they possibly be consigned? Let none then deceive themselves with names. I repeat, that the Voluntary principle, for which we contend, is only and wholly the efficiency of the Gospel. This is the principle which is called in question; this is the principle, which, as one set for the defence of the Gospel, I now endeavour to defend. And I warn every professor of religion against the rash utterance of a syllable to its prejudice. Dispute, if you will, the warrior's pretensions to courage, or the statesman's to wisdom, or the orator's to eloquence; a disparagement of their claims may be peevish, prejudiced, unworthy,

yet towards fellow-creatures it is scarcely presumptuous. But, O beware of impugning the adequacy of His arm to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, and flee the end of those over whose judicial doom the sentence is written—"They limited the Holy One of Israel."

These general remarks, however, will still be met by the allegation of experience. "The Voluntary principle," says an expounder of the Assembly's circular, "has limits beyond which it is found in practice to be utterly powerless." I reply, the limits of the voluntary principle cannot have been found, for its progression is not yet terminated. The Secession was originated by four ministers, the Relief by one. The origin of other dissenting denominations had a like resemblance to the mustard seed, and under all the disadvantages of small numbers, slender means, civil disabilities, general opprobrium, competing with a church, comprehensive, wealthy, endowed, chartered, fashionable, we have gained every year in relative strength, till our demand for equal rights is hung this day in doubtful balance with the attempt to withhold them. And still we are progressing. What, then, is found about limits? How can you find the limits of the ocean's tide while it is yet rolling onwards at your feet, and the sand marks of last hour are surmounted this hour by the exulting billow. But though we are gaining upon the general community, we are making no impression, it is alleged, on the poorer classes. Are we not? Look at our churches and the established churches, and say whether the great proportion of church-going poor are not in our fellowship. The fact that in all the nine old town churches of Edinburgh, there are only seven hundred and fifteen of the old town inhabitants (mostly the poorer classes) who are seat holders, and that the poor, with this small exception, go to the dissenting churches when they attend church at all, is a most extraordinary disclosure, and presents a sample of what will be found to prevail more or less throughout the kingdom generally. Our churches then, the poor themselves being judges, are best adapted to supply their wants. But the establishment, it is answered, is so limited, that it is untried. Extend it, say our brethren, and then see what wonders it will accomplish. Whatever it may do, this is an acknowledgment, *that its doings are as yet prospective*; that, from whatever cause, the Church of Scotland has not proved hitherto the instructress of the poor.

This much, as concerns limits, is confessed to "have been found by experience." And why expect better things in time coming? In some cases high seat rents may be affirmed to have excluded the poor. But go to country parishes, where the sittings of voluntary churches cost the labourer some shillings yearly, while those of the establishment might be obtained almost or altogether gratis, and still the result is the same, still we have the body of poor worshippers; and there can be no hesitation over which church to say most appropriately—To the poor the Gospel is preached. The case, then, is plain; if you wish to benefit the poor, alleviate their burdens, and enable them to fulfil a desire, so plainly evinced by them, and so honourable to their character, not to serve God with that which cost them nothing. But though we have the poorer classes, we are told we have not the poorest—the wretched dregs of society! And who has them? Have our brethren got them? If not, we are on a level. But there is a gross deception in this representation. Why are our poor not deplorably destitute? Just because they are our poor—I mean in contradistinction to the ungodly poor—because they are our church members; because they hear and obey the message, that saith "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things else shall be added unto you;" and because, when they cannot labour, they receive from their brethren, though less amply than I could wish, the benefit of the precept, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Extreme wretchedness is commonly the attendant of crime, and it would say little for our churches, if the poor, on entering their fellowship, did not better their circumstances by amending their practice. We could point to not a few, once indolent and evil doing, who are now industrious and well doing from attendance in our churches. And besides those recovered, who may estimate the numbers preserved from guilty destitution? Who will affirm that but for voluntary churches the thousands of outcast population would have been ten thousands? And who may ascribe powerlessness to the principle that has averted such a fearful accumulation of ignorance, iniquity, and wretchedness? This much we can say of our churches. To these we must add our missions and schools, instituted directly and exclusively for the ignorant and careless of the population, and without adducing



the details of reports, I pronounce it a calumny refuted by broad indisputable proof, to affirm of this free-will mechanism that it is utterly powerless. It is proving yearly, and monthly, the power of God unto salvation to many a poor sinner that believeth; and whenever the national church has made an inroad on Scottish heathenism, it has been by casting aside the state trammels, and acting on the reviled voluntary system. Taking up the facts, then, just as they stand in this country, the working of the voluntary system proves, we maintain, its decided superiority.

But, as our brethren tell us, their system is not yet fairly tried, I affirm, in response, that our system is only approximating a fair trial. The disadvantages of our commencement were prodigious. It seems almost miraculous to think that Voluntary Churches should so speedily have struggled from such weakness into such strength; from such penury into such resources; from such prevailing contempt into such general acceptance. No wonder they had enough to do, for a time, in supporting the Establishment and in promoting their individual prosperity; and hence, comparatively neglected more comprehensive exertion. But now their own circumstances are becoming, in many cases, easy, and now, therefore, from this vantage ground they are more free to look around with compassionate eye on that field, which is the world. Besides, the obligation to disseminate divine truth is only now receiving that full exhibition which is requisite to its full influence. I have before remarked, that if a person do not believe the truth, it cannot be expected to persuade him, and that even though he do believe it, yet if he is not instructed in its resultant duties, we cannot look for him complying, where he does not suppose himself enjoined. And such exactly has been the case with the support and extension of the gospel. Not only have miserly worldlings been falsely styled Christians, and then cited against the power of Christianity, but true Christians themselves have not been taught to estimate adequately the claims of Christian benevolence. They have not been taught that theirs is the undivided and overwhelming responsibility of promoting or neglecting the evangelization of the world. They have been and are assiduously taught the reverse. It is daily and hourly urged on them that nothing but extravagance or wickedness can expect so much at their hands.

Take a case too common. Here is an easy-minded Christian giving the pounds to mammon and the pence to righteousness, serving the flesh with the feast and the Spirit with the fragments; making sacrifices for his credit, for his family, for all and any objects but for his Saviour and for souls; and to him Churchmen come and say, "Do you know what these Voluntary Christians would have you to do? They would actually have you to spend considerably more for Christ and his kingdom! What absurdity! We look for nothing so irrational: at farthest, we enjoin a very moderate generosity; give us a pittance, and we will go to the state for the rest—they must be wrong-headed or wrong-hearted individuals who would draw more largely on your love to your Lord." I am aware that strong urgency is sometimes employed, but it generally contains even then some self-destroying reservation. Witness the following clause in the Assembly's circular:—"With their utmost strenuousness the Committee will not raise more, and that too in the course of years, than the requisite building expenses, after which the requisite endowment would need to be provided for." Was there ever a more suicidal appeal? A Christian community are told before hand how little they will raise; and this is the only sort of prophecy I know of that can be safely made, because it has the virtue of securing its own fulfilment. Yet, even with this hint before them, exerting all its counteracting influence, the Established Churches were beginning to do well. Many noble subscriptions of £200 each were made in this city, and also large collections obtained, which would have honoured any ecclesiastical communion, when, lo! reviving benevolence is stifled by a clamorous application for additional endowments!! How is it possible for the Voluntary principle to work fairly in these circumstances? What principle ever wrought powerfully so distrusted, deserted, trifled with? Now you appeal to it, now pronounce it powerless, now adopt it for a moment, and now exchange it for its opposite. The duty being divided with the magistrate, is half extinguished; a sense of obligation is proportionally impaired; and, what is more, and worse, he who shows himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him, refuses to bless a stinted dependence on his spirit. The church, equally as the saint, must relinquish these earthly depend-

ences, if it would prove and incontestibly evince the power of the grace of God. How different from this contradictory and vacillating appeal is that of our simple and Scriptural system to the conscience. We come to professed Christians, and say to them,—Now, don't deceive yourselves; your Lord has devolved on you the conveyance of his gospel. The trust is momentous, and it is unqualified. In vain you invoke earthly powers to share it with you; you have the whole accountability. In your hands is the treasure. If you transmit it not, you are standing between the blood of Christ and those for whom he died. You are incurring all the terrors of their destruction and his wrath. But if you do transmit it; if, in love to the Saviour and to souls, you do communicate his message to the perishing, then in the greatest and most glorious work which the universe and eternity ever contemplated, you enjoy the celestial honour of working together with God; and when your work is closed with your day on earth, you shall thereafter, having turned many to righteousness, shine as the stars for ever and ever. The mind which can resist these claims is dead to all godliness. They must tell on Christian sympathies. They are telling, and that effectively. The standard of liberality is rapidly rising, and the more all frigid legal resorts are abandoned, and the more all defences of them are discredited, and the more the one plea of Christian duty is enjoined and admitted, the more the standard of munificence will rise, till the heretofore disheartened, disparaged charity—not the icy charity of law, but the fervent charity of faith—shall rear her gentle head into the heavens, and smile benignantly on grateful nations, the glory and the joy of the whole earth.

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LECTURE SIXTH:  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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ON CHURCH REFORMS, ESPECIALLY THOSE  
RECENTLY ATTEMPTED IN THE  
SCOTTISH ESTABLISHMENT.

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DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup>, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,  
JOHN-STREET.

BY THE REV. J. C. EWING.

MDCCCXXXV.

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## LECTURE VI.

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THE department of the general subject which has been assigned to me is that of Church Reforms. It merits certainly an attentive consideration, and may well claim to be taken up as a distinct topic. Our opponents at least make much of it. As in common life men of infirm virtue and feeble resolution quiet their own conscience, and appease their friends, by the purpose and the promise of amendment, and live and die, resolving to change their plan; so the friends of Church Establishments have unfailing recourse to those reforms which are proposed, or in progress, or to be accomplished, in order to avert the condemnation due to the corruptions, inefficiency, and mischievous operation of their system. It is not exactly that which has been or that which is they engage to defend, but that which may be—the Church as she will be when their favourite reforms have been completed, and the improved machinery is in smooth and unimpeded operation. The Reform of the Church is the one sheet anchor by which she hopes to ride out the tempest of controversy that is at present blowing about her. Her advocates escape from the demonstration of the iniquity and mischief of the system derived from the past by turning to the future. They oppose to the veritable facts of history the veriest fictions of hope; they imagine that the experience of the past is to go for nothing as a test of the operation and effects of the system: and they willingly would have it conceded, that nothing should be brought into view as evidence, but the harvest of good which they fondly hope is to spring from the Reforms which are in progress, when once they are perfected. These are to remove whatever is unsightly, anomalous, or detrimental—to silence all detractors, to reconcile

all who have been alienated from the Church, gently to constrain them again to return within her pale, and to extinguish dissent.

When our opponents, then, make so much of their Church Reforms, when they trust to these for blunting the edge of every argument, and parrying every thrust, we may well be excused for looking at them a little narrowly, for attempting to estimate their character and amount—to ascertain the direction in which they operate, the length to which they go, and the results which will probably flow from them. Such an inquiry is the more proper and necessary at present; for we have at last, in the revolutions of time, come to an age of Church Reform. We have got what, if it is not strictly a new thing in the earth, is at least novel to us—never before seen by the existing generation. We have, at last, got something more than mere talk. We have, at least in the Church of Scotland, got what is represented as a thorough-going Church Reform, proposed, discussed, and perfected, in one short Assembly. It might be invidious, and it is perhaps unimportant to inquire, what is the precise origin, and whence the speedy ripeness of this Church Reform?—whether the honour of it is due to the *pressure from without*, or the wisdom within? Perhaps rather it is owing to a combination of both; the reality of it being due to the pressure from without, and the cautious and curiously nice limitation of it to the wisdom within. Be that as it may,—when our friends of the endowed Church invite us to inspect their reforms—to contemplate their Ecclesiastical Institution new-modelled, re-invigorated, and restored to pristine strength and beauty by the wonder-working Veto, it would certainly show a grievous lack both of courtesy and curiosity on our part, did we not comply with their invitation, and consider and report on their Church Reforms, proposed or completed, fancied or real.

In the further consideration of the subject, we intend to make some general observations on the subject of Church Reforms, and then consider specifically the Reforms recently attempted in the Church of Scotland.

We begin, then, by making some general observations on the subject of Church Reforms. Our first remark is suggested by the topics and the object of the preceding Lectures in this Course. It has been shown you, that the civil endowment of any form of Christianity is unscriptural and is

unjust. And the process of argument on these points is so simple, satisfactory, and conclusive, and has been so luminously exhibited, that we trust you are now in some measure satisfied that Church Establishments are unscriptural and unjust, and that it is a doing of evil that good may come, to take a man's money from him without his consent, and against his will, to propagate Christianity. Now, no correction of minor deformities, or incidental evils that attach to existing Church Establishments, no improvements in their structure or administration, no change in the mode of levying their compulsory support, so as to make it least annoying, no transfer of the liability to pay tithe from the tenant to the landlord, can alter the essential character or destroy the distinguishing features of the system, can sanctify injustice, or render robbery acceptable to God as burnt-offering. You may, by reforms and alterations, conceal or remove their more glaring defects, render their deformities less conspicuous and offensive, limit the amount of mischief they cause, make their evil tendency somewhat less malignant and decisively marked, and somewhat increase the amount of good from the preaching of the word and the administration of the ordinances of Christianity within them; but after you have reformed, to your heart's content, the principle of compulsory support on which they are based remains unaffected; and while based on this principle, they are and must be unscriptural and unjust. By all your ameliorations and reforms, you have merely enacted injustice in its least oppressive form; you have merely exhibited what is unscriptural in its least repulsive aspect. Your reforms cannot render that which is opposed to the law of Scripture and the rule of right consonant to these, cannot render Churches dependent on compulsory support, or a maintenance for the ministers of Christ levied by the sword, less an infraction of decency, religion, and equity. No; State Churches must be wholly changed, not modified; they must be revolutionized, not reformed; they must doff the king's livery, which sits awkward on them, emancipate themselves from their voluntary bondage, and be purely and merely Churches of Christ. Their tribute-money must bear the image and superscription of Christ, not that of Cæsar, and must be rendered from respect to Christ's law, not from respect to Cæsar's decree.

And as no Reforms can alter their essential injustice,



so neither can they destroy their inherent evil tendencies, though they may modify the exhibition of these. As what is unjust is always injurious, and as what is unscriptural is always unwise, so Churches maintained by compulsory support must always be, however reformed, an offence against enlightened expediency, as well as against Scriptural truth and equal justice. They still must keep "in a state of unnatural separation those who ought to be united; and in a state of unnatural union those who ought to be separate." Their tendency, as exhibited in their effects, must still be "to secularize religion, promote hypocrisy, perpetuate error, produce infidelity, destroy the unity and the purity of the Church, and disturb the peace and order of civil society." The laws of eternal justice cannot be despised, or Scriptural principles departed from with impunity. If men trust to the wisdom of man for their guidance, they will find that it is foolishness with God; if they labour in vanity, they must reap vexation of heart; and if they resign themselves to the operation of a false principle, it must conduct them to mischievous results. Every thing acts according to its nature; and so must a principle which, like that of Church Establishments, is unjust and unscriptural. No management can make it innocuous. You may dam up the stream; you may bank it in; you may cut new channels for it; yet still the water flows downwards, and seeks through every devious channel, and finds at last the level of ocean. So you may reform Church Establishments as you please, as far as their distinguishing principle of compulsory support operates, it will lead to evil. The paltering of Churchmen in their attempted reforms, is like the vain efforts of the mariners of Tarshish in rowing against the tempest, when they had the fugitive prophet aboard. They carry with them an unhappy freight; and Jonah must go overboard ere the sea be calm and heaven propitious.

A very instructive light is thrown on the character and operation of the system of Church Establishments, by the lateness of the period at which these Church Reforms have been seriously proposed, and the terms in which, at this late period, the friends of the endowed churches speak of the perishing necessity in which they are of such reforms. These reforms have been seriously proposed—at the eleventh hour, when the existence of Church Establishments was in peril—when their partizans had been driven successively from every

position to the very boundary, and had turned to bay in the last field of their domain. They have made a show of seriously setting about the reform of their institutions, when it was no longer a question whether they could retain their abuses entire, when the question had become, whether they should be reformed, or altogether abated as an intolerable nuisance. That matters had come to this point, is not our statement merely. It is that of their own friends. Mr. Ewing, late member for the City, when presiding at the Glasgow Anti-Patronage meeting, declared, that the "question was not now, whether we should have a reformed or an unreformed church; but whether we should have a reformed church, or no church at all." If, then, the Church of Scotland has at last, in any degree, shown a disposition to accept of reform, it has, on the showing of her own friends, only been when she *could do no better*, when she stood on the brink of annihilation as an endowed church, when her existence was perilled by the continuance of her abuses, in their entire and unreformed state,—when the question was, "*non an imperet, sed an esset.*" Now, at all times, men acquainted with human nature, have had a salutary distrust of the sincerity of death-bed repentances, of compulsory reformatations, of confessions of guilt, and promises of amendment, made to prevent the enforcement and execution of the the last sentence of the law. They are seldom sufficient and satisfactory in themselves, or of good promise as to their results. When the excitement of terror is allayed, and the pressure of constraint is removed, these death-bed penitents commonly relapse into their old courses. We are distrustful, therefore, of the Church's reforms; for on the testimony of her own sick nurses and quack doctors, she has yielded to them, not till she was at the point of extremity.

While the lateness of the period at which reforms have been seriously proposed, throws suspicion on the heartiness with which they have been gone into, it also throws most grievous suspicion on the worth of the institutions themselves. On the acknowledgment of their friends, they are, and have been intolerable. And yet it is only late in the evening of their day, and when urged on them from without by the voice of public sentiment, in a tone which they dare not disregard, that tardily and unwillingly, they have at last turned to the consideration of Church Reform, as a practical question. To avail myself of the words of one of the Lec-

turers who preceded me, on another occasion, it may be remarked, that "the most esteemed writers on the other side distinctly declare, that unless the reforms which they propound, be speedily effected, the connexion of Church and State must inevitably be dissolved. Such representations embody a most important acknowledgment. The civil establishment of Christianity has been tried on a wide scale, and for a long period. It was introduced first into the Roman Empire, then into all the nations of Europe, and has subsisted from the fourth century to the present time. It might be supposed, then, that the proof of experience would be considered complete. But, after all that has transpired, we are required to believe on the one hand, that the attempt to improve Christianity by legal assessments, has been hitherto so unhappy, that the Scottish Establishment, acknowledged to be the purest on earth, depends for its very existence on immediate and extensive reforms; and yet, on the other hand, our modern churchmen are equally resolute in exacting the conviction, that the experiment has only to be tried a little longer, modified according to their wise suggestions, in order to be absolutely successful. Surely, they must have a very good opinion of their own judgment, if they charge us with presumption, because we confide less in their prospective planning, than in historical testimony, so extended and enduring."\*

This is an important and instructive view of the point. There must be some thing inherently and incurably wrong in the system—there must be some mischievous and malignant tendency in the institutions, which can neither be removed nor restrained, since after being tried through successive centuries, in all variety of forms, and in all diversity of circumstances, their more enlightened and dispassionate friends, cannot accept the best of them as it stands, without reform. After so lengthened and so diversified an experience of them, we may warrantably conclude, that their pervading evils and defects are not incidental or adventitious, but essential and inherent; that their evils are part and parcel of them, and must live and die with them; that they are the native and necessary effects of the principle of establishments, and that it has been not the misfortune, but the crime

\* Speech of Rev. D. King, at the meeting of the Edinburgh Voluntary Church Association.

of Church Establishments, that they have been miserably constructed, have worked ill, and have generated and gathered abuses as they waxed old.

To take the single point of Patronage; where have we ever seen an Established Church, secure in her endowments, free from this stain? And were Patronage extirpated root and branch from any Established Church, how long would the civil powers leave her in the undisturbed enjoyment of her endowments? Yet what is the estimate formed by the warmest advocates of Establishments, of the worth of a Church with Patronage as its concomitant? Take it in the words of Mr. Sinclair, chairman of the committee of the House of Commons on the subject of Patronage, at the Anti-Patronage meeting in Edinburgh. "Whatever effect may be produced by the declaration, I have no hesitation in declaring, that if I was asked whether I would rather see the church destroyed as an establishment, than patronage co-existing along with it, I must say, that although I utter this with pain and sorrow at heart, but yet still I must say, that I would not hesitate to prefer the former alternative." Now, we call upon you not only to mark the solemnity with which this declaration of sentiment is made, but also the tenor and the terms of it. He does not say, that if he were asked whether he would see an Establishment *erected* with patronage co-existing with it, or none, he would rather have none at all; but if he were asked whether he would see the church *destroyed* as an Establishment, or patronage co-existing with it, he would rather have it destroyed. Well, then, as his patronage committee has ended in smoke, as clerical churchmen on a nearer view and a more careful consideration of the matter, think it safest not to touch patronage, as there is no present prospect of its being abolished, we count on the vigorous and efficient co-operation of Mr. Sinclair. As an honest man, he will doubtless, this very session, and in the teeth of Sir Robert Peel, move, in the terms of his own solemnly recorded sentiments, that as patronage is found co-existing with her, the Church be destroyed as an Establishment.

My hearers, and especially those of them who are churchmen, must not suppose that there is in my mind the slightest feeling of regret at the recent agitation for Church Reform, late as is the period at which it has commenced. From the bottom of my heart, I rejoice in the activity and the success



of the agitation for Church Reform, both as beneficial in its direct effects on the endowed sect, and in its ultimate operation, as eminently auspicious to the success of our cause. There is one effect it necessarily produces, which is instructive to all, and which cannot be without its influence on those pious and candid churchmen who are sincerely concerned for the interests of religion, and the honour and independence of the Church of Christ. The agitation of topics of Church Reform ever tends to bring the church and state into collision, and to force attention on that dependence of their institution on the civil power, which churchmen willingly forget, and on which they suffer a convenient obscurity to rest. Pensioned churches must be more or less tributaries to the treasury. If "nourished by the king's country," they must desire peace with him. In the words of the biographer of Wycliffe, if Christian societies "will look for something more than protection, let them look for something less than independence. Let them descend to become pensioners, and they will cease to be free." It galls, however, the honest pride and praiseworthy independence of the better sort of churchmen, to have the real state of matters told them, or to have it practically brought home to their feelings by events. They would willingly hide even from themselves the chain which they wear; they make a virtue of necessity. They console and amuse themselves with the forms of freedom, with the show of independence, when they have lost their spirit and substance. They put a bold declaration, perhaps, in their standards, like our Scottish Church, that Jesus Christ is the sole Head of the Church, and direct their Moderator to dissolve their Assembly as an ecclesiastical act, contemporaneously with its dissolution by His Majesty's Commissioner, as a civil act. They vapour a little in words, and talk big, as if they would not suffer the honour and independence of their church to lie under impeachment;—all the while, however, cautiously taking care not to provoke the superior power to put an authoritative negative on their proceedings. And it is an amusing instance of the facility of self-deception, to see how far they succeed by these arts, in concealing from themselves the degradation of their position, and persuading themselves into the belief of their unshackled freedom, and entire independence. But let a time of agitation for Church Reform come about, let them outstep the limits of their ac-



customed caution, let them venture on bolder and more efficient measures than the small matters of ecclesiastical regulation in which they usually deal, let them touch a stone of the fabric which the state has compacted, and alter what has been defined and limited by Act of Parliament;—and it requires no prophet's mantle to foresee what will be the result. There will be collision with the state; the slumbering independence of churchmen will be roused; and when the state authoritatively enforces its control over the church, checks and chides her for acting for herself, the more honest and faithful churchmen will come out from her, and be separate. There will be a new Secession, in order to the following out of begun reformation. These newest of all new light Seceders, will for a time occupy the position, and hold the language, and assert the general principles of the Original Seceders. But more favourably circumstanced as practical separatists from the endowed church, for the unbiassed consideration of the question, they will eventually become voluntary churchmen. And we may venture to predict, that from the altered state of matters, and the progress of enlightened views in the public mind, it will not, this time, take a hundred years to perfect the revolution of sentiment. Nay, we think it probable, that as to the general question of the voluntary support of the gospel, the scales will fall from the eyes of many of them, in the very act of coming out of the endowed church.

Let us revert to actual circumstances as illustrative of our general reasonings here. We will afterwards take occasion to show, how paltry and inefficient, except for the gendering of strife, is the measure of last Assembly as to the veto. And yet even as to this small matter of reform, Dr. Cook has clearly shown, that they have outstepped their province and their powers. They may, indeed, give him pamphlet for pamphlet, and reply to his arguments by a show of reasoning, and carry on the warfare with the "paper pellets of the brain." That, however, is child's play. When the question is brought into the civil courts, (as who doubts it will, from the number of cases depending, and the obvious interest of presentees?) then comes the real tug of war. And when the civil courts decide, in accordance with the declared opinion of the best legal authorities, that the presentee, rejected by the veto of the majority of heads of

families, has, notwithstanding that rejection, the legal right to the benefice, will the vaunted pretences of our churchmen about the independence of their church, go for nothing? Shall we think them so dead and cold of heart, so poor in spirit, as after having magnified this pet reform, after having spoken of its vital necessity and importance, after having represented the very existence of their church, as depending on its being carried, tamely to submit to have it nullified by the civil courts? Will they eat in their declarations, or will they act on them? Will they openly wear their dishonour, or will they wipe it off? Doubtless we will have the reforming majority of last Assembly, renouncing connection with the Church of Scotland, and organizing churches, in which neither kings, nor courts, nor commissioners dare interfere to abridge their Christian liberties. They must either pursue this course, or stand condemned before the world, out of their own mouth, as dishonest and insincere, as having merely sought, by plausible and hollow pretences, to amuse and mislead the people.

So much for the necessary effect of actively pushing Church Reforms, in bringing Church and State into collision, and enlightening Churchmen on the actual and degrading dependence on the State in which their Institution is placed. There is another effect that must necessarily result from pushing Church Reform actively. It must tend to sunder the discordant elements which in the State Church are held in strange and unseemly combination. It has been well stated that the principle of a compulsory support of religious Institutions, not only keeps in a state of unnatural separation those who ought to be united, but in a state of unnatural union those who ought to be separate. There is obviously, on the part of the clerical members of Church Establishments, an extensive, and flagrant, and dishonest compromise of religious principle. This, which is avowedly and undeniably the case in the English and Irish Churches, is also, to a considerable extent, the case in the Scottish Church. There meet in her Church courts, there mingle in her communion, there stand together in her pulpits, men who, as to religious spirit and character, are as opposite and irreconcilable as light and darkness. In saying so, we are merely re-echoing the statements made by their own ministers. It is the statement of Dr. Burns of Paisley, in a

sermon preached before the most Evangelical of their Synods, approved by its sanction, and published at its request, that there are in the Scottish Church “men who can eat her bread, while they do not her work—men who can preach Socinian, Pelagian, or Antinomian heresies, while they subscribe a Calvinistic creed—men who can prostitute the chair of truth to the gratification of a base and brutal spirit of personal revenge—men who can abuse the holy discipline of the Church to the purposes of fell malignity—men whose zeal never kindles save only when ‘the rights of the Church,’ as they term them, are supposed to be in danger—men who disgrace their calling by the grossness of intemperance, and the scandals of profligacy.” He adds, moreover, that among these may sometimes be seen the loudest and boldest of the Church’s defenders. Now, along with these, we all know that there are in the Scottish Church many holy, faithful, and Christian men. We suppose we must not say what is the nature of the bond that links together these ill-assorted materials. We suppose that we must not hazard the conjecture that it may be a *golden one*, and therefore the heavier and the harder to break. But we may at least state the fact, that in our State Churches there are held in unnatural union those who ought to be separate; that the chilling breath of Church Establishments has frozen into one heterogeneous mass, water, sticks, and straws. Now, what will separate the discordant mass? A genial thaw will do it: the raising of the temperature to a sufficient height will do it; for it is only at or under the freezing point that the union is *perfectly* safe. The infusion of a spirit of searching inquiry into religious abuses, of a spirit of honest, thorough-going, and efficient Church Reform, would pass through the mass like the electric spark through the chemical mixture, resolving it into the dissimilar elements which are held in artificial combination. Let Church Reform be pushed with sufficient activity, and you infallibly divide the Church. The parties cannot drag on together; and, as aversion increases, the *couples* must either be unloosed or broken. The truth is, that such are the discordant elements combined in State Churches, that either extreme, in the progress of corruption or in that of purification, is fatal to their entireness. They are like the glass globe filled with water, and hermetically sealed, which is in danger of being broken from either ex-

treme of heat or cold. Cool it down too far; and the globe is shivered by the expansion of the water in congealing. Heat it too much; and the globe is shivered by the expansion of the water in passing into vapour.

We have said that we rejoice in the activity and success of the agitation for Church Reform, as in its ultimate operation eminently auspicious to the success of our cause. Every act of efficient Church Reform makes the connection between Church and State more awkward and unseemly; makes the ministers and members of the Church more ill at ease in that connection, and paves the way for the gradual transmuting of her into a purely Voluntary Church. All thorough-going Church Reform verges on the grand result of the separation of Church and State. This is not only, in our estimation, its tendency, and would, according to our belief, be its result;—even the dumbest Churchmen themselves, amid some confusion of idea, often stumble on the acknowledgment; and the more clear-headed distinctly recognize it. The acknowledgment has been made equally by those who are averse to thorough-going Church Reform, and by those who are favourable to it. It has been made by those who are averse to it, as by Dr. Cook, who bluntly stated that they must break their compact with the State, and renounce their dependence on it, before they could do all acts to which a Church of Christ is competent. It has been made by those who are favourable to it, as in the late pamphlet of Mr. Bridges, the brother of the well-known expositor of the cxix. Psalm. He is a Churchman, and a member of the English Establishment; he would stand by her to the last, and reform her. He blames those of the Evangelical party who are quitting the Church, from conscientious, but, he thinks, mistaken motives. Now, here is his pattern of Church Reform. After proposing that the bishops be withdrawn from their parliamentary duties; that the discipline and ecclesiastical affairs of each diocese be managed by a convention of clergy, and lay delegates, with the bishop as chairman; that the bishops be chosen by these conventions, he adds:—"I do not see why every one of the alterations here enumerated could not, together with the annihilation of pluralities, be included in a single comprehensive, well-digested measure, to be entitled the Church Reform Bill. Its preamble *might recognize the principle of*

*separation between church and state*, enacting all the above-mentioned improvements, as the incipient results of such recognition; leaving it for time and circumstances *to complete the divorce*." You will see, then, that while a suspicion of the truth occasionally comes across the dullest of them, the more clear-headed, whether averse to efficient Church Reform, or favourable to it, distinctly recognize the fact, that it verges on the grand result of the separation of Church and State.

We now proceed to consider the Reforms recently attempted in the Scottish Establishment. In proceeding to consider these, perhaps we ought to say something here in reference to the oft-repeated remark, that had those who seceded from the Church of Scotland remained within her pale, and so strengthened the hands of the reforming party, had they not weakened it by their secession, practical, effective, and important reforms would have been carried much sooner. We think such an expectation wholly unfounded; and the blame cast on those who retired from the Church of Scotland, rather than wound their conscience by remaining, as if this were a selfish and ungenerous course, is eminently unreasonable and indecent.

As to the retirement of those who commenced the Secession, they had been censured at the bar of the Assembly merely for petitioning against its acts. They had the liberty of entering their dissent from the acts of any of the Church courts, however nefarious, taken away. Mr. Erskine was censured for preaching against the corruptions of the Church, and, with those who adhered to him, suspended from the ministerial office, because they protested for liberty to testify against the defections of the Church on proper occasions. And Mr. Gillespie, who commenced the Relief, was deposed simply because he declined being present at the induction of a presentee, who was opposed by the whole body of the parishioners. Now, after having thrust good men out of the Church, because they ventured to express their disapproval of her policy, or even simply because by their conduct they tacitly indicated their disapproval, it is the height of indecency for Reforming Churchmen to turn round and hypocritically say, they ought to have remained within the Church. Why! the Church thrust them out, because they dared move a lip, or wag a finger, in disapproval of its



acts. If they had remained, it must have been gagged and bound;—precluded from any ecclesiastical resistance to the tyranny of the dominant party.

Again, we have the testimony of Dr. Chalmers, that the Church cannot dispense with Dissenters, cannot continue in any moderate degree incorrupt, or active, unless kept from settling on her lees by the rivalry of opposition on the part of the *private adventurers*. On the Doctor's own showing, then, those who seceded from her supplied the preserving salt, and the exciting stimulant, without which she would have become incurably lethargic and corrupt, would, "amid the darkness and silence she had herself induced, have drawn the curtains around her, and retired to repose."

Moreover, by seceding from the church, the four brethren who originated the Secession brought the church a length, in four years, which, had they remained within her pale, they would not have done in forty. In 1732 the Church of Scotland was verging fast to the lowest point of corruption; and, in her defections and ecclesiastical tyranny, had forgotten even vulgar decency. The General Assembly had refused permission even to record dissents against its own acts. Yet four men, at first treated with scorn and contumely, by resisting the fulminations of the church, and threatening to erect a separate religious party, brought the assembly, in four short years, to make the memorable declaration in 1736, that "it is, and has been, ever since the Reformation, the principle of the Church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregations; and therefore, it is seriously recommended to all judicatories of this church, to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, as they regard the glory of God, and the edification of the body of Christ." There is nothing operates upon a corrupt church with so speedy and powerful effect as a little wholesome secession. It is like blood-letting to an inflammatory patient. The quantity withdrawn may bear a small proportion to the whole body; but, small as it may be, it suffices to abate the fever, arrest the inflammation, restore the patient to a measure of reason, and delay, at least for a time, the doom of death. We will promise the small section of clerical Churchmen, who are honestly for having patronage removed root and branch, that if they pursue that course which

honesty and conscience dictate to them—if, denouncing patronage as unscriptural, they will come out from the church with which it is incorporated, and refuse to have any longer connection with what is unscriptural, they will do more for Church Reform, by this one act of secession, than they have done by half a century of struggles within her bosom.

We add, as of itself sufficient justification of those who at any time retired from the Church of Scotland, that we are not to do evil that good may come; and that these good men did right without calculating consequences, to obey the dictate of conscience, by renouncing unscriptural connections. The effects have justified the wisdom of this course, as well as its honesty. Had it not been for the separations from her, the Church of Scotland would never have been arrested in her course of corrupt defection and ecclesiastical tyranny, and at this day she would not have been in the state of comparative purity in which she is. And had it not been for the increasing numbers, and imposing attitude of Dissenters, who is so simple as to believe that any one of the recent reforms in the Scottish Church, whatever be their value, would have been effected.

The recent enactment of the Assembly, in reference to Patronage and Calls, claims our special attention; as affording a measure both of the honesty and the wisdom of our Reforming Churchmen in the Scottish Establishment. Let us mark not only what they did, but what they declined doing. They adopted the Veto; but they rejected the proposal to take measures for procuring the abolition of patronage.

The circumstances connected with the anti-patronage movement are too recent to have yet dropped from your recollection. Evangelical churchmen went all lengths in denouncing patronage. Language seemed to fail them in describing its mischievous operation and mournful effects. Anti-patronage petitions were got up in every part of the country. An anti-patronage lecturer perambulated the country, to enlighten the people on the subject, and rouse their slumbering zeal. The table of the Assembly groaned with anti-patronage overtures. The Grey ministry were soundly rated for their want of zeal and forwardness, in taking measures to remove that mother of mischiefs—patronage; and a parliamentary committee endeavoured, by labori-

ous examinations, to ascertain what would be the probable effects of abolishing patronage, and having recourse to popular elections in the ecclesiastical as in other corporations. Well, what has it all issued in? Why, the act restoring patronages still stands on the statute-book unrepealed and unaltered. Patrons still present: still as of yore, the patron may be an infant, an idiot, or an infidel. Even the papist has still his right unabridged to present to the benefice in the Protestant Church. Yet there has come a perfect *lull* in the anti-patronage tempest. Even the pink of Scottish Presbyteries—the Paisley one—does not venture on an anti-patronage overture. And the anti-patronage lecturer's occupation is gone; and he has had to sheathe his sword, as if for lack of argument. And what is the explanation of all this? Why, they have discovered that the parable of the tares may have an application to the case. The patronage tare has certainly been sown by an enemy's hand; and their first thought—and the most honest one—was to have the field cleared of it. But, on reflection, there sprung some doubt, whether this might not incur the hazard of disturbing the good seed of endowments. Therefore, they have let the tares stand untouched, lest the endowments should be uprooted; not, I suppose, that they hate patronage less, but that they love endowments more. This course is liable to the objection, that it may be a little awkward and inconvenient should their parishioners, who responded so promptly to their call to petition against patronage, think of asking them if they were really in earnest, and meant what they said. As, however, they have chosen their own course, it is their part, not ours, to defend it, and to explain to their parishioners its entire consistency with their former professions.

The Assembly's recent enactment is to the following effect. A list of communicants is to be made up every year in each parish. In the event of a vacancy, the patron still, as hitherto, presents whom he chooses; but, if a majority of the *male heads* of families enter a dissent on the day of the call's being moderated, and if, after repeated hearing of the presentee, and being dealt with by the Presbytery, and being called on individually to make a solemn declaration that they are not influenced by factious motives, but by a regard to their spiritual welfare, a majority shall still be against the presentee, he shall be rejected.

It is evident that in this enactment the Assembly have gone beyond their province and their powers, and have ventured to provoke a trial of the question—which must speedily be brought to issue in the civil courts—whether an enactment of the Assembly can, in certain cases, and to a certain extent, nullify and effectually obstruct the exercise of a right, secured by parliamentary statute. On this point the reasonings of Dr. Cook, in his late pamphlet, are clear and satisfactory. The law assigns, on the one hand, to the patron the right to *present* to the benefice, and on the other to the church courts the right to *induct*; and, as a preliminary, to judge of the moral and literary qualifications of the presentee. If the church courts pronounce the presentee disqualified from defect of morals or of literary qualifications, their judgment legally and sufficiently obstructs the patron's presentation from taking effect. But the recent enactment of the Assembly does not define or declare any *personal* qualification necessary in the presentee—a thing within their province. It sets up an arbitrary rule, that the objection of a majority of the male heads of families, being members, shall render the patron's presentation null and void: and we have no doubt that the civil courts will hold the presentee rejected by this arbitrary rule, legally entitled to the benefice.

Passing by this, let us gather up the anomalies included in the enactment. It gives the right of objecting only to the male heads of families, not to females. This cannot arise from any strained or mistaken interpretation of the apostle's rule, that a woman is not permitted to speak in the church; for they allow a woman to appoint a minister, but not to object to him. The Countess of Sutherland can appoint to nearly all the parishes of a Presbytery, as they successively fall vacant; but the godly Mrs. Janet Brown cannot state her dissent to the Countess's presentee, who is to be over her in the Lord. The *countess* is elevated to an unscriptural height of prerogative in the church, lording it over God's heritage; but the *matron* is depressed beneath the common level of Christian privilege, as being of no account.

Again, the enactment arbitrarily assigns to a certain class—heads of families—the exclusive privilege and power of objecting against the presentee, as not calculated to be a suitable pastor to them—a point the other communicants

may be as well qualified for deciding on as they. A man may be a licentiate of the church, qualified to receive a presentation, and to take the charge of a parish, yet not be qualified to enter a dissent against the most imbecile trifler, that ever, by the arts of sycophancy, recommended himself to a worthless patron.

While the Assembly affect to concede to the male heads of families the right of objecting, they are careful to obstruct its exercise, by as many impediments and limitations as possible. Dissents can be notified only at one time and place—in the parish church, on the day of moderation. After that, the dissentients are open to the arts, influence, and solicitations of the patron, the presentee, and the Presbytery, to induce them to fall from their dissent: but, however the unfavourable impression against the presentee may spread, no additional dissents can be received. The patron, the presentee, or any member of Presbytery, may require the dissentients, individually and severally, to declare that they are not influenced by factious feeling, but by a regard to their spiritual welfare; and if any hesitate or refuse to do this, their names are to be struck off the list of dissentients. Yet the patron is not required to make any declaration that he is influenced by a regard to the spiritual welfare of the parishioners, in his selection of the presentee, though this were more natural, and is more necessary than the other.

The most indecent part of the enactment has yet to be brought into view. If the patron neglect to present within six months of a vacancy occurring, the right of presentation devolves on the Presbytery. Dr. Cook has shown, that, according to the regulations of the enactment, a Presbytery, if they have an opposing majority in the vacant parish to work with, can without any great artifice, commonly prevent the patron from having an opportunity of presenting a second time in the six months, should the first presentee be rejected. And should the right of presentation devolve on the Presbytery, the right of objecting on the part of the male heads of families at once falls to the ground. There is one law for patrons, and another for Presbyteries. The patron's presentee is fair game. The arrows of the veto may be let fly at him; and the dissents stuck in him may bristle all over him, like the quills of the fretful porcupine.



But the Presbytery's presentee is a *tabooed* personage. The shield of ecclesiastical privilege is thrown over him. Not a voice may be lifted against him.

We avail ourselves of the language of Dr. Cook, in characterizing this piece of clerical ambition and encroachment on popular rights by our zealous Church Reformers:—"The exposition which has been given of the new scheme, renders it most manifest, that it is perfectly vain, and almost insulting, to talk of it as a great boon conferred on the people. With a view to what is the purpose of all nominations to parishes, it actually confers on them nothing at all. It gives them, it is true, the strange right of rejecting, without the shadow of a reason, the person named by the patron, but it does not give them the slightest power to procure the object of their own choice. When they have succeeded in nullifying one presentation, they may, in rare cases, have the satisfaction, if they so regard it, of nullifying another; but the issue of all this is, that they serve merely as a stepping-stone to the Presbytery to seize the patron's right, that the clergy themselves may exercise it; and when *they* have once got the right, the nullifying process is at an end, and the congregation are, as to the induction of their minister, just as they were before the enactment, with this one difference, that instead of getting their pastor from the patron, they get him from the neighbouring clergy, who had amused them with the idea of having struggled for popular privileges, but which, without scruple, when it suits their inclination, or their interest, they wholly disregard."

In short, the operation of the enactment will be, that in *some* cases it may take the appointment of the minister out of the hands of the patron; but in *no case* does it give it to the people: it merely transfers it to the presbytery. And, when this does take place, in many Highland and rural districts, the appointment will be in most miserable hands.

Observe, too, that this enactment, which, when the presentation devolves on the Presbytery, takes away all right from the people to object to their presentee, and requires them to receive him, however obnoxious to them, proceeds from those who, in the very same act, "declare that it is a fundamental law of this church, that no pastor shall be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people." The preamble and principle of the law, and this

enactment, stare flat contradiction at each other. They are as directly opposed, and as wide asunder as East and West. The preamble declares that it is a fundamental law of the church, that no pastor shall be intruded on *any* congregation contrary to the will of the people. And, in order that this principle may be carried into full effect, as they ludicrously pretend, it is enacted that the Presbytery's presentee shall be inducted whether the people be pleased or whether they be displeased—that should he be unacceptable to them, still he shall be intruded contrary to the will of the people, and that they shall have no remedy. I may make bold to say, that in Ecclesiastical procedure this stands nearly without a parallel for gross inconsistency, barefaced hypocrisy, and contempt of common decency.

The review we have taken of this recent attempt at Reform in the Scottish Church, naturally throws us back on our opening remark, that no reform of an Ecclesiastical Institution, which is based on an unscriptural and unjust principle, can, in the nature of things, be sufficient or satisfactory. You might as well hope to give stability to a building whose foundation was insecure, by repairs of the roof, or the plastering of the walls. It is constructed on a false foundation; and the foundation must be changed, before the structure can be mended. If you would effectually reform our Established Churches, you must re-construct them on the platform of Scripture, on the gospel plan. As it was justly said in the recent debate in Parliament on the appropriation question, it is not a modification of the tithe-law we want, but *a new principle*. Till we get that, all Church Reforms will be but skinning over the festering wound; but wreathing with flowers the fetters in which the church is bound; but easing the yoke on one part of the shoulder, to make it press more painfully on some other.

“Reform and ameliorate,” is now the watch-word of Churchmen. And, however alien to their spirit in other times, such has ever become the cry of the defenders of systems radically wrong, whenever the progress of enlightened views in the community has brought into peril the precious and gainful mischief. Such was the hollow pretence set up by the friends of Negro Slavery. And to them it was justly replied, that the grand, the efficient, the only worthy reform, was to loose every bond, and let the oppressed go free.

And so now, to our Reforming Churchmen, it may with equal justice be replied, that the grand, the efficient, the only worthy reform, is to reclaim the Church of Christ from adulterous connections with the rulers of the earth, and to restore her to Him who is her Maker and her Husband, —the Lord of Hosts is his name.



LECTURE SEVENTH:  
UNDER THE PATRONAGE  
OF  
THE GLASGOW  
VOLUNTARY CHURCH SOCIETY.

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“THE POWERS THAT BE.”

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DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,  
JOHN-STREET.

By JAMES BEITH.

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## LECTURE VII.

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THE subject to which our attention is this evening to be directed, according to the general statement in the Advertisement, is, "The Voluntary Church principle in relation to the duties of 'the Powers that be.'"

In treating this branch of the Voluntary Church question, I shall endeavour to show—

First, That the legislative authority, and the executive power of the kingdom of Christ, are such as to preclude all magisterial authority and interference in the management of its affairs.

Second, That all Christian magistrates are nevertheless bound to regulate their official conduct by the revealed will of God.

Third, That "the powers that be" may be "ministers of God for good" to the people, in the Scripture sense of the terms, without setting up a national establishment of Christianity.

Fourth, That there is nothing in the provisions of the social compact that authorizes the supreme power to establish any religion by means of a forced assessment; and—

In the last place, I shall endeavour to point out the only principle on which Christian magistrates ought, or can promote the interests of true religion.

At this stage of the discussion of this most important question in this place, and after the varied and comprehensive views which have been taken of it by the gentlemen who have preceded me, it will not be expected that in what follows I can keep entirely clear of the whole of the positions which they took up, and so well and so nobly defended,

not of course with the poor soulless arts of special pleading, nor by the still more reprehensible method of attempting to depreciate the heads and the hearts of their opponents, even although thinking themselves, as these opponents do, entitled to go their own warfare on other men's charges, but by clear and fervid appeals to the understanding and best affections which can distinguish between the "voice of the chief shepherd of Israel" and "the voice of strangers."

To follow, in some things, in their tract, to me is not grievous, and, as to you, it will be safe; permit me, in a few sentences, to remind you of the vital importance of a right understanding of the present question, as bearing on the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ, in as far as this is necessary to the making good of our first proposition, namely,—

That the legislative authority, and the executive power of the kingdom of Christ, are such as to preclude all magisterial interference in the management of its affairs.

That the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, either as to its origin or its results, is confessed by our church friends, but in practice they appear to be greatly mistaken in their views respecting several important departments of its legislative and executive government. Like all other kingdoms, the kingdom of Christ has laws for the regulation of its subjects, but it has no legislator other than its supreme King and Head, Jesus Christ. Moses foretold this when he prophesied saying, "The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken. 'I,' saith God, 'will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him, [and who will presume to add thereto,] and it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.'" Isaiah, adds his testimony to the same truth where he says, "The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it [not with compulsory endowments, but] with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." In strict accordance with this, we read, in the last chapter of the

gospel by Matthew, that "Jesus came to his apostles" and spake unto them, saying, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me, go ye therefore unto all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you*; and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And with this agrees what Paul says in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "He is far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. He is above all things, and by him all things consist. He has all things under his feet, and He is the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Thus, is Jesus Christ the supreme, the only lawgiver in the New Testament kingdom. Like himself, His laws must be perfect; nothing defective, nothing inapplicable, in consequence of which we find they provide for all that is to be done in his service, and not only this, but they also determine by whom it is to be done. It is in overlooking, or not understanding these truths, that the whole malady—and it is a grievous one—which afflicts churchmen, as the advocates of a compulsory support of Christianity, is to be attributed. That their system usurps, in many instances, the legislative authority of this kingdom, cannot be reasonably doubted by any one who ever perused the acts of parliament in which it lives, moves, and has its legal being, and which in their church courts they quote as authorities much more frequently than they do their Bible. Nor is the violation of the executive authority of the kingdom of Christ, which their system perpetrates, less obvious, or less to be deprecated. This authority, we maintain, is wholly spiritual, and lodged only in the church. I, however, here frankly confess that in proof of this I cannot produce an example from the New Testament, of any tithe or annuity tax delinquent being brought before the church of which he was a member, and the law of discipline enforced for his correction or expulsion, because, according to primitive arrangements and practice, there could be no such delinquents in the first churches, which, in Judea, were in Christ Jesus. But, from the general law—embracing all offences—laid down in the 18th of Matthew, and, as in its spirit, acted upon by the

Corinthian church, when collected "together in one place," according to the command of the apostle Paul; as also, from the manner in which the question about circumcision was treated and settled, of which we have an account in the 15th of the Acts, as well as from many other circumstances touching the practice of the first churches, and recorded for our learning—nothing can be clearer than that the administration of the laws of the church lies with the church, and not with any civil ruler. I here wish it to be distinctly understood, that in saying this, I am only attempting to establish a principle recognized, as far as I know, by all Voluntaries, entirely irrespective of the manner in which that principle is to be reduced to practice, about which some Voluntaries are not agreed. But does not the statutes of the Church of Scotland grossly violate both the legislative and executive authority of the New Testament Church, by conferring on the civil magistrate the power, and enjoining it as his duty, "to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed; for the better effecting whereof" it is provided "he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the will of God."

I know that churchmen deny the common-sense import of this passage of their Confession, and explain it to mean, "that the civil magistrate has power to regulate things *about* the church, but no power to regulate things *in* the church." This, however, to the great run of common minds, must be a distinction without a difference, unless, indeed, some Voluntaries should be so fastidious as to think that "unity and peace, the truth of God, his ordinances duly settled, administered and observed," are things *not* "in the Church of Scotland," but as churchmen no doubt most surely believe them to be things in their church, and as they cannot deny that the civil magistrate has the power, and that it is his duty to "take order" respecting them, their mock distinction between things about the church and things in the church must be regarded as a pitiful attempt to get out of a difficulty of which, from their increasing information, they are in reality now ashamed.



But, more particularly here, is not the law of maintenance a law affecting "things in the church," and of such vast consequence to her very existence, that were the needful not collected by pains of law, she must go down? at least so say those who should know best; yea, so convinced are they of this, that every picture of spiritual desolation and social disorganization which the frightened imagination of the poetic Chalmers could fancy has been put in requisition to induce the people to submit peaceably to their present burdens. Yet the execution of this law of maintenance, so essential to the existence of the church, the establishment principle devolves on the civil magistrate, to be enforced by such carnal weapons as "letters of horning and processes of augmentation," ending, if not complied with, "in bonds and imprisonments"—a species of force, I need not say, utterly at variance with the spirit of the gospel—"the sword of the spirit"—the only weapon that the "Captain of Salvation" has provided and ordered to be wielded in his service.

Again, the law of Christ's house, which confers on and secures to the members of his household the right of electing their own pastors, than which it would be difficult to imagine any thing more strictly "in the church," or more intimately connected with its well-being, has, by the establishment practice, been blotted out of the divine statute-book, and the prerogative conferred on certain powers without the church, not only to the violation of all Scripture authority, but to the breaking down of every principle which distinguishes between the free-man and the slave, and for the miserable consideration of an endowment, submitted to, than which, for meanness of spirit, as was observed by a previous Lecturer in this place, it would be difficult to find a parallel; and will it be believed that the leaders of the men who not only submit to this, but glory in the price of their degradation, are the men who speak of, and treat the Voluntaries of the present day, as the Voluntaries of primitive times were spoken of and treated as the "offscourings of all things."

Lastly here, and equally indicative of churchmen's ignorance of the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, and of the establishment principle as being destructive of the power of the church to manage her own affairs—her creed, if she must have one to explain in what sense she understands the declarations of Scripture, ought surely, above all things, either "about the church" or "in the church," to

be of her own compiling, and subject to such alterations and amendments as she in her advance to perfection may think necessary. But who will say that this is the case with the creed of the Church of Scotland? Is it not notorious, that in the matter of patronage, for example, the compilers of the Westminster Confession were overruled by the secular power? But, granting the secular power to have had nothing to do with that Confession, save only to sanction it, what, under the establishment principle can be thought of the claims of a creed which owes all its governing force to an act of parliament? and what becomes of the power of the church to alter and amend it, should she see cause? This power is absolutely annihilated. To alter and amend her creed in the slightest degree, and, however willing, the Church of Scotland has no more power than the voluntaries have to deprive her of the price of her submission. Without the consent of such noble, and of course well qualified divines as the Duke of Wellington and Baron Seagrave, once the well-known Captain Berkley, among the Lords, and Sir Robert Peel, late Prime Minister, and Mr. Daniel O'Connell, among the Commons, not one jot or tittle of her Confession can be disturbed. To the civil power she is in this respect in the most degrading bondage. Many of her best sons feel the weight, and would fain ease themselves of the disgrace of such secular servitude, in as far at least as patronage is concerned, but the endowment here steps in, and so confounds principle with their mistaken notions of expediency that they submit to the yoke rather than abandon the pension.

Such are some of the necessary fruits of the establishment principle, showing, as I think, most distinctly that it is utterly subversive of the provisions of self-government which run through the whole of the institutions of the New Testament Kingdom; separating it from the kingdoms of this world, and thereby rendering its existence in the world perfectly compatible with any form of polity which men may choose to adopt it being always provided that that polity does not go out of its legitimate course to meddle with things too high for it—such as the best mode of supporting the gospel. Self-government is one of the distinguishing and unalienable characteristics of the kingdom of Christ. It is designed to fill the whole earth, and hence this power, that, unfettered and uncontaminated by any legislative connection with the king-

doms of this world, it might remain, under all forms of civil government, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," to show forth the praises of Him whose prerogative it is to call men out of darkness into his marvellous light, and when, having so called them, to impose on them such obligations, and to place them under such laws as he may think most conducive to their well-being. In this, as in all other departments of his universal dominion, he is as wise in counsel as he is mighty in working, and being so, to his method of conducting the affairs of his spiritual kingdom all who are under law to him must submit with the willing obedience of sons, "for who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" None, and therefore he will not give his glory unto another, nor his praise unto any arrogant mishapen image of his authority, and if so, no magisterial interference in the management of his kingdom, either as to the making or execution of its laws, can take place without an impious usurpation of his authority. All this being true, which I think cannot be denied, what can Dr. Smyth possibly mean by saying, in his Lecture, "You thus perceive, my friends, that the connection which subsists between the church and the state, in this country, is one which does not involve the surrender of even one hair-breadth of her spiritual independence," and yet, as we have seen, in the instances pointed out, she cannot move one step without the permission of the state.

But, while we earnestly contend that no man, whether he be a king or a priest, has any right either to add to, or take away from the laws of the Kingdom of Christ, as promulgated in the Scriptures; and, further, that the whole of the executive power is lodged in its own members, and must be exclusively exercised by them in that character; do we, as has been alleged by Churchmen, deprive the civil magistrate of the power, or relieve him from the necessity of regulating his official conduct according to the revealed will of God? To show that the Voluntary principle has no such tendency you will recollect, is the second branch of our subject.

This alleged ruinous effect of the Voluntary principle, were that principle generally acted upon, has been often

urged against our cause, and the idea, that the judge, when he ascends the bench, and the legislator when he enters the senate-house, must leave their religion behind them as Dr. Smyth, in his recent Lecture, in the Tron Church, expressed it, has been rejected with such pious horror, by our church friends, charity compels us almost to admit, that their zeal for endowments has actually wrought them into the belief that what they say of the Voluntary principle, as leading to such awful consequences, is true. What Voluntary advocate, either in speech or in writing, ever said that in the case contemplated it would not be the duty of all men, whether kings or magistrates, or legislators, to regulate their conduct, both private and official, according to the revealed will of God, I know not, nor do I believe any of them ever did. At any rate I am sure that the Voluntary principle cannot be justly charged with it. In that principle there can be nothing hostile to acts of justice and mercy being performed by legislators and judges under a deep sense of their responsibility to God for all that they do in their public as well as private capacity. It is, in fact, nonsense to talk of a religious man leaving his religion behind him. The thing is impossible. His religion is part of himself, and in proportion as it has taken hold of his mind, it will influence his conduct in the senate, and on the bench, as well as in the walks of private life. To put this matter beyond all cavil, permit me to refer you to the authority of the great apostle of Voluntaryism, who not only taught it by precept, but enforced it by his own example, for an "*ensample*" to all that should come after him. From the conduct of this apostle, on a certain occasion, toward Ananias, nothing can be plainer than that judges and magistrates, and governors of all grades, although they may not have established Christianity, are nevertheless held responsible for their official acts. Acts 23d chapter and 1st verse:—"And Paul earnestly beholding the counsel, said, men and brethren I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And Ananias commanded them, that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee thou whited wall, for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest thou me to be smitten contrary to the law." Here we see a judge, who, not only had not established the true religion, but who violently opposed it, and persecuted its professors, as the order to which he belonged had persecuted its great



founder even to the death, held responsible for his official conduct, without any inconsistency on the part of this apostle, who, in declaring the mind and will of his master to kings and governors, never so much as once hinted to them that it was their duty to establish the true religion, by compelling their subjects to contribute of their substance for the support of the clergy.

But, my friends, in saying that this fact would place the innocence of the Voluntary principle in this matter beyond all cavil, I have perhaps reckoned without my host, for peradventure it may be said that this judge, although not having established the true religion, yet not being a Voluntary, his case is not in point. To this it is only necessary to answer, that unless Churchmen contend—which I fear some of them do—that it is better for the people to be compelled to support an establishment of false religion, than to be allowed to support any religion they please, or that governors by establishing a false religion become more responsible for their official conduct than by establishing no religion at all; the case of Ananias in being warned by Paul of the displeasure of the Almighty for his brutality as a judge, clearly indicates that rulers, although they may not have established the true religion, are nevertheless, by the Voluntary principle, as acted upon by this apostle, held responsible for the upright discharge of their official duties.

Perhaps I should here offer some apology for having noticed this groundless objection to our cause, but supposing, from the frequency and the urgency with which it is pressed, that our church friends regard it as an insurmountable obstacle in the way of carrying out the Voluntary principle to its legitimate results, I have thought it might not be altogether useless to attempt to show that none of those results can be the necessitating of legislators and judges to throw aside their religion when acting in their official capacity.

This brings us to the third thing proposed, namely, to endeavour to show that “the powers that be” may be “ministers of God for good” to the people, in the Scripture sense of the terms, without setting up a national establishment of Christianity.

You are all aware that the Voluntary principle has been strongly objected to, by our church friends, as being, in their opinion, inconsistent with the character which the



Scriptures gave of the civil power as “the minister of God for good” to the people, and that they have laboured fervently, in their vocation, to show that being “the minister of God for good,” it is the duty of the government to provide religious instruction for the people at the national expense. This is one of their strongholds. Let us try whether one “small smooth stone,” projected against it, from the foundation on which it is said to be reared, shall not demolish it, leaving no wreck behind, save only its defenders, as resolute in its defence as ever. “Though vanquished, they can argue still.”

Had this character of the civil power, as drawn by the apostle Paul in the 13th of the Romans, had for its original a government so anxious for the success of pure and undefiled religion among the people, that it laid the whole of them under contribution as inexorably as our church establishment law lately did the widow of Rathcormack, for the pious purpose of raising wherewithall to enable the state priests to appear in and support the elevated station in society to which their learning and labours and virtues are said to entitle them, and especially that the bishops might rear their mitred heads in courts and parliaments, as so many inducements to the people, the more readily to listen to and imbibe their lessons of *humility* and *self-denial*—had, I say, the apostle Paul had such a Christian government in his eye, when he described the power under which the Romans were about the year 62, as being the minister of God for good to the people, we could not have avoided the conclusion that it was in being thus solicitous about the interests of Christianity, that it merited the character he bestowed on it, and coming to this conclusion, the next step would have been unavoidable, *viz.* that no government which did not “take order” to compel the people to support the state clergy as a means of providing themselves with religious instruction, could, in Paul’s sense of the terms, be the minister of God for their good.

But how stands the fact? Is it not notorious that the power in question was at that time held, not by Christian men, but by idolators, not by the professed friends of Christianity, but by its avowed and implacable enemies, and who consequently, instead of establishing it by positive institution, persecuted those who had embraced it, and by every means within their reach endeavoured to banish its very name from

the earth. This being undeniably the case, is it not passing strange, even in churchmen, credulous in many things on the church question as they are, that they should for one little moment believe that, in the character which Paul gives of the Roman power, there is any intimation whatever that it is the duty of the supreme power under which we live to set up an establishment of Christianity? The premises can by no means warrant the conclusion. The Roman power had not established the true religion, yet Paul affirms that that power was "the minister of God for good to the people;" and why, I should like to be informed, may not the supreme power in Britain be the "minister of God for good" to us, without setting up an established church? If the Roman power, administered by idolators—enemies of Christianity—were the minister for good to the people, what can possibly hinder the British power, administered by professing Christians, from being a minister of a like character to us? On any principle, not scandalously libellous: of our rulers, the supposition is as baseless, though of course not quite so calumnious, as is the assertion of Mr. Fleming of Neilston, where, in his Critique on Dr. Wardlaw's Sermon, he says, "If any thing be certain, this is certain, that Christ laid down no rules for the government of his church, or if he did, they are not recorded in the New Testament."

The fact is, from the circumstances of the case before us, it must be admitted that the power spoken of by Paul was the civil power when acting purely about civil matters, dispensing justice between man and man, protecting property, and in this way being a terror unto evil-doers and a praise unto them that did well. To suppose otherwise, to suppose that the religious—the idolatrous acts of the Roman power, in any respect whatever, entered into the character which Paul gave it, as the minister of God for good, would be to suppose him an abettor of the most degrading superstition and most flagitious tyranny and oppression that ever disgraced our lapsed world. For the honour of Christianity, such an idea must be strongly repudiated which leaves us no alternative but to resolve the apostle's meaning into the supreme power acting in civil matters for the welfare of the people; and, if so, no inference in favour of it being the duty of magistrates in our day to compel, by force of human law, the pecuniary contributions of the people in support of

an established church, can be drawn from its character as the "minister of God for good to the people."

We now come to our fourth proposition, namely, that there is nothing in the provisions of the social compact which authorizes the supreme power to establish any religion by means of a forced assessment.

On this subject churchmen, I confess, have some plausible things to advance. They reason after this manner:—"It being on all hands admitted, that true religion enters deeply into the best interests of civil society, that it is a matter in which all are personally concerned, and that, consequently, by promoting its knowledge, and its power, all would be benefitted, is it not rational to infer that there must be some understood provision in the terms of the social compact, authorizing the conservators of the national well-being to provide, at the national expense, the means of instructing the people in the principles of true religion?"

Whether there be or not, on the principles of what is called natural religion, on which some say the social compact is founded, I shall not at present say, but from the history of all governments in all ages, we know that such an opinion has always been entertained and acted upon in reference to what, for the place, and the time being, was thought to be the true religion. The United States of North America are an exception to this rule; there the people are left to provide religious instruction for themselves, and for being so left, their government is called, by many on this side of the water, an Atheistical Government. We, however, willingly concede the universality of the opinion, that it is the duty of "the Powers that be" to interfere in matters of religion, from which it is supposed by churchmen to be founded in nature, and this, with them, is proof-positive of its fitness and propriety. Dr. Smith says, "We find that Numa, Lycurgus, Solon, and others, all recognized the principle of a national faith, in order to the external welfare of society, 'These having not the Law, were a law unto themselves.'" And what did they with it? Paul tells us, they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things;" and yet such men are held up for our imitation, because "they recognized the principle of a national faith, in order to the external welfare of society." Such ethics are too ethnic for the voluntaries; for with our views of the

meaning of a higher authority—the Scriptures of truth, in which we find many things propounded contrary to the wisdom of this world, and especially in what relates to the best mode of propagating the true religion, we more than doubt, the propriety of following out the suggestions of what these Scriptures call “vain philosophy,” and more particularly in such cases as where the wisdom of man is counted foolishness with God. The subject now under discussion is one of these, as you may all see by consulting *the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians*. A previous lecturer having given us a clear and eloquent exposition of the principles to which I here refer, it is at present only necessary for me to remind you, that God, in determining the means by which the gospel could be most successfully promulgated, in place of selecting the first preachers of Christianity from among the great and the learned of that day, who might have been reasonably expected to have had great influence with the people in recommending the new order of things. He chose them from among the poor and the illiterate, a class of persons possessing no personal influence whatever, verse 26 of that chapter,—and this verse I quote from Mr. Knight’s translation, as being generally understood to be more consonant to the original text, than our common translation, and, as every one must see, more agreeable to the scope of the apostle’s reasoning. “Ye see the calling of you, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble call you,” or are engaged in preaching the gospel by which you were called, “but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,” and so on in the same strains of derision, in reference to the schemes of the wise disputers of this world, which ought to teach us, that in serving God we must not adopt what we may think expedient, but in all things to keep strictly by the “law and the testimony,” even although the admirers of such great men as Numa, Lycurgus, and Solon, should be opposed to us. Were we left to ourselves in this matter, our own views of expediency might be allowed to influence our conduct, or perhaps, like churchmen, for want of a better rule, we might draw largely on natural religion, which is said to be highly favourable to endowments; but seeing we have positive institutions to guide us, it were dishonouring to him whom Christians call their King, to renounce his authority, by resorting to the pauper elements of a worldly policy, for the purpose of supporting and extending his kingdom. The



primitive principle was the voluntary principle, "Freely ye have received, freely give:" in accordance with which we find the first preachers of Christianity went forth on their mission, taking nothing of the Gentiles. But the wise men of this world—the Solons—preferring their own device, of reaping before sowing, and, in as far as dissenters are concerned, reaping without sowing at all, this order of things, and though sanctioned by the authority of him, on whom hangs all the glory of his own house, has been departed from. This may be very convenient for those, who, under the wing of a secular patron, get themselves put into the priest's office for a piece of bread; but who will say there is any Christianity in it, or that it has been conducive to the renovation of mankind? Let the state of religion under a state-paid priesthood, bear witness, and if it have not been beneficial, but if, on the contrary it have been the means of ingendering and perpetuating abuses, most prejudicial to the interests of society, we may safely infer, that in the social compact, which is intended to promote the improvement and happiness of the people, there is no provision which authorises the supreme power to establish, by means of a forced assessment, any sect professing the Christian religion.

What then was state, or popular Christianity from the days, or a little after the days of Constantine the Great,—that is the great founder of national establishments of Christianity, down to the Protestant Reformation? Was it not among the mass of the people a system of the grossest superstition, and on the part of the clergy, the most revolting tyranny—a tyranny which not only exercised itself in depriving the people of the sacred light of the Sun of Righteousness, that they might be the more successfully held in bondage, but which, in many instances, usurped the functions of the civil magistrate, and thereby laid prostrate the power which all Christians are commanded to honour. Was it not to the machinations of these religious "conservatives," as they would no doubt call themselves, that most of the desolating wars, which during that long dark period afflicted Christendom, must be attributed. In short, search the records of the crimes of cabinets, and you will find from the fourth century downwards, priestcraft more or less instigating and carrying forward schemes of intolerance and spoliation, which, but for the intrinsic power of the truth, as manifested in the doctrines and practice of the voluntaries of those times—who, about the beginning of the eleventh century, began to



be known by the names of the Waldenses and Albigenses, Christianity would have been altogether exterminated. These witnesses for the truth being the objects of perpetual and cruel persecution, their passive courage was often put to the severest trials, during which hundreds of thousands of them were immolated on the altar of the established church: many thousands more were forced "to wander in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;" and all this, at the instance, and to gratify the worst passions of an established priesthood, first raised into political consequence by the "kings of the earth, giving their power to the beast," or in other words, by violating the great principle for which we contend—the voluntary support of the gospel.

Nor has matters, in as far as state endowed Christianity is concerned, been much mended since the Reformation. It is true, the light which had previously dawned in spite of "the church," and which, in its increasing strength, produced the change in some countries that we call the Reformation, has continued to advance, by which civil and religious liberty is now much better understood, and their claims more generally acknowledged, than when all the kings of the earth paid their addresses to one and the same mistress: but for this result, we cannot say we have been much indebted to the principles and practice of Protestant establishments.

Protestant state churches all more or less inherit the temper and dispositions of their mother. Intolerance and rapacity have always characterised them, and powerfully frustrated the good which they might otherwise have done. This has been signally the case with our Irish establishment. For three hundred long years, that unhappy country has been under the spiritual superintendence, as it is called, of the clergy of the most richly endowed church in the world; and what are the achievements they have won? Has the moral wilderness under their cultivation become a fruitful field, bearing all the marks of one which the Lord hath blessed? or have their ministrations to any extent circumscribed the dark dominion of popery? Let Sir Robert Peel, her most eloquent and powerful advocate, answer. By the London newspapers, he is reported to have said, in his speech in opposition to Lord John Russell's late motion, respecting the

surplus revenue of the Irish church. "You say, and you say with truth, that the Irish church has not succeeded as an establishment, that it has failed in accomplishing the object for which it was established, that there are no more than 1,000,000 Episcopalians in Ireland at the present moment, and that there is no proof of their rapid increase, and you then say, that having thus failed to accomplish the object for which it was established, you ought to take from it its property. Now, he, (Sir Robert,) would assert that there were causes in operation, which prevented the success of the Protestant establishment in Ireland, and that these causes are no longer in operation, and consequently the arguments which supported the Noble Lord's amendment no longer applied, now that the Catholics are on an equal footing with the Protestants"—that is, in being eligible to sit in parliament. Here we have a distinct admission, that the Irish establishment has done nothing for Ireland; but had Sir Robert been a voluntary, he would have had a much better understanding of the cause of that failure than he appears to have. He says, "that cause is not now in operation," because Catholics may now sit in parliament. Their former exclusion was no doubt a degradation, which many of them felt keenly, and resented violently, and being thought necessary to the existence of the established church, would very naturally prejudice them against her doctrines; but there is another cause, to be soon corrected I hope, still in operation, much more powerful than the one specified by Sir Robert, and of which he, statesman as he is, seems to be innocently ignorant. The tithes, the tithes, the tithes, constitute the master grievance of Ireland; and their operation, I have no doubt, has contributed more to steel the minds of the people against the Protestant religion, than all other causes put together. It has been truly said, it is "vain to think that conversions can be effected by addresses delivered in the garb of oppression," but from this having been so long persisted in in Ireland, injustice and Protestantism have, in the estimation of the people, become convertible terms; and as he that would successfully preach against theft, must himself be honest, it is no marvel that tithe-supported episcopacy in Ireland should have so signally failed in accomplishing the ostensible end for which it was set up.

Had, my friends, the sunshine of court favour, glaring through the crimson medium of military-tithe-collected munificence, been able to command success, or in any degree

to influence it, Ireland should long ere this time have been the best instructed and the most virtuous province of the world called Christian. There the incense of holiness in heart and life, rising to heaven in a continuous pillar of cloud, from the perpetual offerings of the new obedience of the gospel, should have shed its grateful fragrance throughout the length and breadth of the land, realizing the joyous anticipations of the Hebrew prophet, when he sung, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." But, alas! to the influence of a state-paid priesthood, Popery with all its concomitant evils, has demonstrated itself to be invulnerable, it being at this moment, from the causes just specified, in as far as human causes in such a case can operate, as rank, and even more widely extended over that devoted land, than when, by the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood, Episcopacy was first established on the spoils, though certainly not on the ruins, of one of the forms of a kindred antichrist.

Did your time permit, it might be here noticed, that mere inefficiency is not the only charge which might be successfully brought against the establishment of episcopacy in Ireland, for though it has been powerless for good, it has been potent for evil. Civil discord and strife often leading to incendiarism, murder, and rebellion, and these furnishing employment to the "finisher of the law," in innumerable instances are traceable to the practice of levying tithes for the support of an alien creed.

But let us hasten across the channel, and for a moment glance at the working of the English hierarchy, to see whether, in all its "might and mastery," it has done much in advancing either the religious or political improvement of the people.

There, no one has presumed to say the church is established on the rock of poverty, nor until lately was she regarded by our "northern lights" to be highly, because chastely, adorned with the virtues of purity. In the days of Claverhouse and Bishop Sharp, the one the military, and the other the spiritual champion of "black prelacy," as Episcopacy was then called in Scotland, it would have been an easy task to have convinced a Scottish audience that the Church of England was as little consonant to the provisions of the social compact, as it was to the provisions of the New Testament. In our day, however, the common danger to

all national ecclesiastical establishments, arising from the wide spread and still spreading *pestilence* of Voluntaryism, has opened the eyes of the members of the Church of Scotland to the *apostolic* virtues of the Church of England. That establishment is now, it seems, "our sister establishment of the South," and, like the church establishment of Scotland, only requires to be freed from the abuses which *time* has silently engendered, and especially to be extended, to be "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." With us Voluntaries, however, her greatest abuses—such as her compulsory endowment, and the gradation of her clergy, rising by I know not how many steps, from the labouring curate of 20, 30, 40, or 50 pounds a-year, to the archbishop of ten or twenty thousand for—doing nothing—being her principles, no reform, as we were well told last Tuesday evening, which leaves uncorrected these anti-christian evils to mark her parentage, can place her beyond the reach of the condemnation awarded to all such by the principles which we advocate.

But with all her means, what is the tendency, and what are the effects of the establishment principle, when allowed freely to develope themselves, as exemplified in her conduct? Let Milner, who was no Voluntary, tell. In his Church History, he says:—

"That a great decline in the life of true Christianity towards the end of this century, (the seventeenth,) was observable, is generally allowed. It had made rapid progress in the reign of Charles the Second, at whose accession the profligate manners of the court encouraged every abomination. The rigid maxims of the puritans, with their starched persons, were held in aversion, and turned into ridicule; men easily and rapidly passed to the extremes of vice to avoid the suspicion of the semblances of piety, and as a life of dissipation was in fashion, religion began to be a contemptible thing. *Hence, since peculiar seriousness branded a man as puritanical, and effectually prevented all church advancement; the clergy took peculiar care to escape as far as possible from what must destroy their hopes of preferment, and not to be religious overmuch, or sharp rebukers of courtly immoralities.*"

This is sufficiently condemnatory of the pernicious influence of a state alliance. Nor was any thing else to be expected, for where the clergy have to look to the court for preferment, it is not possible, human nature, even in priests,



being what it is, that they can be “sharp rebukers of courtly immoralities.” But this is not all. The same author goes on to say:—

“But a far more pregnant cause of declension than any other arose from the new method of preaching adopted by the latitudinarian divines, who, being chiefly Armenians in opinion, wished to avoid the peculiar and characteristic doctrines of Christianity, which had been so much dwelt upon formerly, and to confine their instructions to the beauty of virtue and the force of moral obligation. Thus, without the great main-spring of Christianity, they laboured in most admired compositions to teach men to be virtuous, till all power of godliness was lost, and an awful demonstration given, that when the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is not taught and felt, all other endeavours to correct the morals of mankind will be impotent and vain.”

Such are the *high-toned principles*, and such the *practical virtues* of political Christianity, and yet we are told, and branded as every thing that is vile, if we will not believe that “national establishments of Christianity are necessary to prevent immorality, error, and unbelief.”

As to the political improvement of the people under the auspices of this church, is it not as notorious as the political servility of the clergy—up to 1831, that what has been gained was gained in spite of the church. All her energies, all her influence, all her skill in the arts of the “deceivableness of unrighteousness,” were constantly employed, and too successfully employed, in defending her favourite position, “No bishop, no king.” Every suggested amendment was met, and very often silenced, by her frightful cry “The church is in danger.” Even the late war, under the effects of which, in the shape of an enormous national debt, we are at this moment labouring under, we were often told by the church was “just and necessary to the preservation of our holy religion.” The struggles of the people for parliamentary reform were also branded as the revolutionary atrocities of atheists and infidels. The people, however, at last succeeded, and as they did so, under the auspices of a government favourable to their righteous claims, the church, in opposing them, gained this proud distinction, that when the rights of man were to be recognized and secured, and after ages of time-serving to ingratiate herself with the powers hostile to those rights, she



immediately asserted her independence, and braved the venerable Premier of the united kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland to his face. All this, and a thousand times more than all this, of the same kind, (for which, as recent authorities, let me refer you to "Beverley's Letters" and "Howitt's Priestcraft in all ages,") being true of this church, who can say, with truth, that to her the people of this country are under mighty obligations, either for the Christianity of their creed, the virtues of their lives, or the possession of their liberties; or that, it being the duty of the conservators of the national welfare to do all in their power to promote the happiness of the community, they ought, at a vast expense, or at any expense at all, to maintain such an establishment.

But, my friends, it is now time that we briefly pay our respects to our own Scottish establishment, and while I readily confess "there is no place like home," yet I must be allowed to say, that no "charm from the skies" has thrown such a halo of primitive glory around the Church of Scotland as to "dazzle" our eyes, so as to hide from them the fact, that in common with all other ecclesiastical establishments she is supported, not by the free-will offerings of her adherents, but by contributions levied upon all and sundry by legal enactment. But passing this, what good has she done in the cause of truth that could not, as asserted in the statement of our fundamental principles, have been done "to an indefinitely greater extent, and with much less alloy than has accompanied her efforts?"

This church was once a Voluntary church. In that character, and through the instrumentality of the "still small voice" of divine truth, accompanied with "power from on high," she successfully combated established Popery, and eventually overcame it. In the same character, though not simply by the same means, which I regret, she resisted prelacy, (now as we have noticed "our sister establishment of the South,") and finally established herself. And what was the consequence of that establishment? Her highest living authority being the judge, we are warranted in saying that no sooner had she obtained a legal settlement, and especially on her final settlement in 1688, than the pernicious influence of her state alliance began to operate in paralyzing her energies, until, becoming settled on her lees, she sunk into such error and apathy as to occasion the dissent of Ebenezer Erskine and his friends, whose "righteous spirits" were so

grieved at the abominations that were done in the midst of her, that they sacrificed their livings within her pale, esteeming reproach by a corrupt church greater riches than all the treasures she had to bestow.

These men, be it observed, dissented, not because she was a state church, but because she was a corrupt church; and, considering their opinions of the lawfulness of state support, their sacrifice is full of instruction to us, as to their conviction of the extent and inveteracy of the spiritual maladies with which she was afflicted. It is in fact allowed, on all hands, that from 1688 to far on in the last century, she was in a deplorable condition both with regard to doctrine and discipline. Since then, however, and I have no wish to deny it, she has considerably improved in both respects. In most large towns her clergy are now understood to be evangelical in their doctrine, although in country parishes many of them are still of the moderate school, and at present, as regards discipline, we have no right to assume that any delinquent, when convicted of indecency or profanity, which is sometimes a very difficult and tedious matter, owing to their parliamentary sanctioned forms, would be allowed to escape punishment, as they call it, with the exception, perhaps, of such "noble offenders" as it would be inconvenient to disturb. Well, seeing she has so much improved, and being still a state church, and as heretofore, her clergy secured of their wages "without pandering," as they say, "to the prejudices of the people," how is this, her improvement, to be accounted for? Dissent, her highest living authority being again the judge—dissent, waxing strong, has roused her from her lethargy, and spurred her into activity. Emulation has been at work. The "state ship," to use Dr. Chalmers' figure of speech, has been taken in tow by the "dissenting galley," no doubt to the advance of the one, although, in some respects, to the great and mischievous retardation of the other. In this way, and in our day, the corrupting influence of the state endowment has been considerably counteracted; but, when we consider the means by which this has been effected, we must still conclude, that if the conservators of the national well-being would forward the interests of pure and undefiled religion, it must be by some other means than by clerical endowments.

In further proof of this, allow me to direct your attention to another principle—a principle which no just conventional

form of society can infringe—I mean that of religious liberty, or liberty of conscience.

The social compact necessarily involves the surrender of some of our natural rights, such as, for example, when, under certain circumstances, the right of doing with our own what we please would be hurtful to our neighbours, or prejudicial to the general interests of society. But liberty of conscience is none of these, and because, for the use we make of it, we are accountable to God only. And what is liberty of conscience? What, but the natural right which every man and woman that comes into the world has to worship God according to the dictates of his and her own conscience, which right belongs to them, not from any of the conventional forms of society, but imprescriptably antecedent to, and independent of all law, common or written, and of the exercise of which they cannot of course be deprived without suffering grievous wrong. And who, it will no doubt be asked by our church friends, is, in this free and Christian country, deprived of the exercise of this right? May not every one, from the king on the throne down to the meanest of his subjects, worship God in any form, or not worship at all, just as he pleases? This, in no sense, can be said to be true of the king, for according to the provisions of the British constitution, he must worship according to the forms established by law. Were he, for example, to become a member of the Society of Friends, which, for the sake of the peace of the world, I wish all kings were, he would be obliged to abdicate his throne in favour of his next heir, who might be of the parliamentary faith. This is too notorious to require proof. Nor is it true, in the proper sense of the terms, of the people. They may indeed worship as they please, but this is not understood by the advocates of legal Christianity to be in virtue of their natural right to do so, but in virtue of what they are pleased to call toleration, which, according to Dr. Johnson, means “sufferance or permission.” For this boon our civil rulers, and especially our state clergy, take unto themselves immense credit, and treat us Voluntaries as the most unreasonable of men, because we do not, in the most submissive and devout manner, grant them the homage of our most profound gratitude, for allowing us, in the exercise of their great goodness, to retain—what? what they have no more right to deprive us of, than they have to deprive us of the use of our own eyes, or of our own existence, or, as has been benevolently sug-

gested, for the restoration of our health, to restrain us, after a particular fashion recently "brought out," as applicable to our case, under the auspices of "The Glasgow Society for promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland." Toleration, indeed! we repudiate their toleration, and claim the liberty of exercising the right in question, not from their sufferance, but on the authority of Him who made us, and sent us into the world to use for his glory and our own good.

But their toleration, insulting as it is, would be somewhat more tolerable if they would be so obliging as to carry it a little further. We are, it is true, tolerated in going to, or staying away from the parish church, and every other church, just as we please; that is to say, we may perish for lack of knowledge if we be so minded: here there is unbounded freedom, but the law ordains we shall nevertheless pay the priest. Yes. Not liking the dilapidated state of the fences of the parliamentary fold, which allows persons of a certain description of character to get in as shepherds "some other way than by the door," or, preferring a fold altogether of their own choosing, one whose "walls are salvation," and whose "gates are praise," they may desert the one provided for them, and endeavour to cater for themselves, but at shearing time and milking time, the claims of the law shepherd must be as scrupulously respected as if they had availed themselves of his guidance and protection, and this is what churchmen call religious liberty; but who so blind as not to see, or so heartless as not to feel, that in the important religious duty of supporting only that church which they think, in doctrine and discipline, most agreeable to the Word of God, we are not in possession of even toleration.

And why are we not tolerated in the one case as well as in the other? Is the duty of hearing not of as much importance to the souls of men as the duty of paying? "Certainly," says the churchman; "but do you not perceive that the system can go on without your hearing, while it could not go on without your paying?" And there lies all the difference, says the voluntary. Well, my friends, we have no great liking to toleration, it being always supposed that those who have the prerogative of granting it, have also the prerogative of withholding it, but if by any means, lawful means of course, it could be extended to us as liberally in the matter of paying as it is in the matter of not hearing, we might be



disposed to put up with it, until kings and priests shall have learned what that Scripture meaneth which saith, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without; do not ye judge them that are within, but them that are without God judgeth." And again, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."

We now come to the fifth and last thing proposed, namely, in a few words, and a very few will suffice, to point out the only principle by which Christian magistrates ought, or can promote the interests of true religion; and here all that I have to say is, that if they are themselves Christian men, they will find out a thousand ways in which they will be able to make the whole influence of their official station to bear on the furtherance of the interests of truth and righteousness. Let justice, mercy, and impartiality, characterize their official acts; this will prove them to be men fearing God and hating covetousness, and get for them a name among the people which will render their example highly influential to the attainment of the wished-for object. Let them be first in every good work, countenancing by their personal exertions and pecuniary contributions whatever to them appears likely to enlighten the ignorant and reclaim the vicious, and in all works of faith and labours of love, always willing to spend and be spent. This is the way for rulers to act if they would be nursing fathers to the church, and who can deny that if all rulers and magistrates would conduct themselves in this way, they would do infinitely more good in furthering the cause of righteousness, "peace on earth and good-will to man," than ever was done by all the massacres, and wars, and bloodshed, and persecutions, and tithe-sales, and rousings, and incarcerations, that have been perpetrated by magistrates in the cause of religion, from the days of Herod down to the last outrage of the Edinburgh-annuity-tax oppression, under the auspices of a combination of men, calling themselves—shall we say it—"Ambassadors for Christ."



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**ON THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE IN RELATION  
TO NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE  
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE POOR.**

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**DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 21<sup>ST</sup>, IN THE RELIEF CHAPEL,  
JOHN-STREET.**

**BY THE REV. ALEXANDER HARVEY.**

**MDCCCXXXV.**

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## LECTURE VIII.

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PERHAPS there is no branch of the present controversy which has been involved in so much obscurity, by vague generalities or dogmatic assumptions on the part of churchmen, as that to which your attention is now solicited. The doctrine of national responsibility has been pushed to an extent utterly incompatible with the rights of man, the liberty of conscience, and the Word of God. In reasoning on this subject, the advocates of Establishments always take it for granted that their system is Scriptural and essential to the prosperity of religion and the well-being of the community, and then urge the deep responsibility of rulers to promote, by their civil authority, their particular views. It does not appear to occur to them that these are the very topics which they are bound to prove. When they clearly demonstrate that civil rulers, or any other class of uninspired men, have a right conferred on them by the God of nations authoritatively to declare what is truth—that the Great Head of the Church has devolved on secular governments the task of disseminating Christianity as a part of their official duty—and that they are bound to tax their subjects for its support and diffusion—when they have done all *this*, then we shall feel the force of their appeal to civil rulers to “take order” that all these matters be effectively done. This is what they have never yet achieved, and never will; because it is alike at variance with reason and revelation. Every man has his personal and relative duties, for the proper discharge of which he is responsible. And in determining the amount of the accountability which attaches to each, it is necessary to ascertain the duties which belong to the individual in all the different relations which he sus-



tains. It is by neglecting this very simple and obvious rule that so much confusion has been introduced into this subject.

I could have wished that this department of the present Course of Lectures had fallen to be discussed by one more conversant with the metaphysical subtleties of abstract philosophy than I pretend to be, and who therefore could more successfully have fought the sophist with his own weapons, and disentangled the meshes of that web which has been so artfully woven around this important subject. But convinced, as I am, that no duty, essential to the welfare of the church and the happiness of man, can be obscurely taught in that Book which has been written under the unerring dictation of the Spirit of God, or involved in dark uncertainty, I shall, taking the Bible as my guide, proceed to show that our opinions, as Voluntaries, explicitly recognize the responsibility of the social community to the Universal Ruler to discharge all those duties which he has enjoined on nations in their civil capacity. Without any further preface, I shall proceed to contemplate—

I. The Voluntary principle in reference to national responsibility. And—

II. In relation to the religious instruction of the poor.

I. Let us inquire if our principles, as advocates for the Voluntary support of the institutions of religion, are incompatible with the fullest recognition of our responsibility to God in our national capacity. Could it be clearly proved that our views in this respect set aside all acknowledgment of God as the “king of nations,” it would be fatal to our system. I for one would then frankly confess that I had rashly adopted them, and would at once abandon our cause. So firmly convinced am I that God is to be acknowledged in every relation of life, that I regard it as a self-evident truth. For, as the universal parent is the author of all the social relations, and has constituted them for his own glory and the welfare of his rational offspring, so his authority is to be regarded as supreme in regulating the performance of all the duties which spring from these. The Word of God is the only unerring rule of duty, and must be held as not only consistent with itself but with all possible truth. We must then try all our theories by this sacred standard: and I not only admit, but strenuously contend, that the prin-

ciples of Revelation should guide all our national deliberations and regulate every part of our social intercourse. But we have surely a right to demand that these principles be correctly applied and properly acted upon in our national capacity as well as in private life. Before we can ascertain the amount of our responsibility as a nation, we must first determine what duties are incumbent on the legislative and executive government. Every social community sustains an important relation to the "God of order." A nation in its collective capacity has duties peculiar to itself, and which can never be discharged by private individuals—such as protecting property and life, and enforcing the claims of justice. And it will be admitted, as an indisputable axiom, that duty and responsibility are commensurate; or, in other words, that the one is the exact measure of the other. We are responsible for nothing but duty, and for the proper discharge of this we are every moment accountable. What, then, are the duties incumbent on nations in their civil capacity? And what are the duties of magistrates in their official stations? An answer to these questions will enable us to determine the amount of their respective responsibility.

We have no intention of theorizing on the origin of civil government. We assume the principle that a community of men, situated within a specific geographical territory, have a right to choose their own form of government, and to frame their laws according to their convictions of what is right and proper. It is not contended, so far as I know, by churchmen, that the civil polity of the Jews is still binding on Christians, and ought to be adopted as a model from which it is sinful to depart. But by surrendering this part of the Old Testament, which has never been expressly repealed, they are bound, in consistency, to give up likewise the authority of the magistrate in religious matters committed to him by God under that dispensation. We have never seen any good reason for abandoning the one and retaining the other. It is indeed manifest, that if the magistrate has any right to punish offences committed against God, it must be in obedience to His command, and in the very manner in which He has enjoined. The civil magistrate not being infallible, has no right to put his own construction on the divine law, and to force obedience to his own views by civil penalties. He must take the divine statute as it is. He must resign the prerogative of legislation which belonged

to no Jewish monarch, and become the enforcer of the laws of God. Neither the dignity of office, nor the combined will of the community, can, without deep guilt, confer a prerogative which the Almighty Ruler holds sacred as exclusively his own.

We readily admit that a nation, in possession of the Bible, is bound to avail itself of all the light which it sheds on every subject connected with the social and eternal interests of man. But then it is bound to bow submissively to divine authority as to the adoption of those means by which these ought to be promoted. For the protection of persons and property, penal laws are necessary—and for executing these the magistrate is invested with the sword. But, from the very nature of religion—the authority on which it rests—and the claims which it urges on the conscience—it is placed beyond his jurisdiction. The Bible comes to man as a subject of God's moral government—demands his obedience on His authority—enjoins him to examine it for himself—tells him he must exercise his own faculties in ascertaining the meaning of its contents—must call no man master on earth in this important matter—and assures him that he must at last give an account of himself to God. The right of private judgment in religion he cannot resign to either civil or ecclesiastical ruler without incurring fearful guilt, and no earthly power may deprive him of this liberty without daring usurpation. The despotism which enslaves the body is venial when compared with a lordly authority over immortal souls. The community has no right to league together to compel the humblest individual of its number to violate the dictates of conscience or set aside an ordinance of Christ. Religion is admitted by all to be a personal concern, and its duties must either be performed voluntarily or they are not discharged at all. Outward compliance, when the heart is reluctant, is mere hypocrisy. The sword of the magistrate may make hypocrites, but can never make Christians. If this be admitted, and who denies it? then it is clear that civil authority is quite inadmissible in religion.

The question, to what extent the magistrate ought to interfere in punishing open profaneness, is one on which Voluntaries and Churchmen are perhaps equally undecided, and I shall not attempt to settle it. There is obviously a very palpable distinction between punishing a glaring outrage against good morals and the decencies of religious

society, and compelling the performance of a religious duty. This distinction is recognized and acted upon in America, and I should wish to see it adopted in our own country. We do not differ much from Churchmen when they contend for the right of the magistrate to restrain outrageous impiety. This is obviously an offence against society, but we deny that it comes within his prerogative to dictate what is a religious duty or to compel his subjects to perform it under the penalty of law.

If this be a correct view of the subject, then it is obviously the duty of a nation to have an express regard to the precepts and morality of the Word of God in framing their civil constitution, and in enacting all the laws on those matters in which it is competent for the legislature to interfere. Secular affairs belong to it, religion to God. These laws ought to be just and impartial: and it is the duty of the magistrate to adhere scrupulously to his compact with the people—to exercise his prerogatives wisely for their benefit—and faithfully, equitably, and impartially to execute the laws.

And, while the law ought never to invade the unalienable rights of the subject, the compact which is formed between the nation and the sovereign should ever leave free and unfettered his personal obligations to the “King of kings.” These are principles which to me appear indisputable. Now, I ask have these simple rules been observed in our national compact with our king? They have not: and they have been violated, upon the principles of Churchmen, in direct opposition to ours. The king is not only bound to act in a certain manner to his subjects, which is perfectly right—but to adopt and maintain a certain set of religious articles, in different parts of his dominions, which is egregiously wrong. He is the only man, in all his dominions, who is bound, by express stipulation, to profess and maintain a particular creed for himself and a portion of his subjects, which is declared to be Scriptural, and from which he cannot depart without forfeiting his kingdom, but is sworn likewise to support a form of ecclesiastical polity in another part of his kingdom, which is also affirmed to be agreeable to the Word of God. He is thus placed in a most inconsistent and unhappy position. If he uses the privilege which belongs unalienably to every man, and which is guaranteed to the humblest of his subjects, of thinking and acting for himself



in the unspeakably important matters of religion, he violates one of the articles of the compact by which he holds his crown. He must heir his religion as he inherits his throne. Were the chief magistrate elective, instead of hereditary, one part of this arrangement would not be so impiously absurd: but no apology can be urged for the other. Should the sovereign at any time entertain scruples about the thirty-nine articles of the English Church or any of the numerous canons by which it is regulated, he must either descend from the dignity of office and resign his honours into the hands of one less conscientious or more submissive to the authority of the church than himself, or obtain relief by an Act of Parliament. Have the members of the Church of Scotland no compunctions of conscience for this unjust and unreasonable predicament in which the king is placed? They demand his approval and countenance to their system, though he has declared it to be contrary to Scripture. The Episcopal Church may suppose that, by imposing this condition on the sovereign, it is placed in an attitude of greater dignity, and has obtained very strong security for its permanency: but then, just in proportion as this circumstance contributes to its welfare, must it tend to humiliate and to operate injuriously on the Scottish Church. Our Presbyterian Establishment cannot surely have so far degenerated as to smile complacently on a system which their predecessors leagued to extirpate, and which they are solemnly sworn to overthrow. Are they conscientiously convinced that Episcopacy is unscriptural? Then how can they fraternize with it? Or rest quietly under the guilt which must attach to us as a nation in not combining our energies to emancipate a large portion of the community from this yoke of bondage? Or are we to believe that they now feel convinced that when once a system has received the sanction of Parliament it becomes true, and deserves our support, however opposite it may be in itself to the Word of God, or our own professed belief? It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the strenuous efforts of our Scottish Churchmen to preserve entire that bloated and persecuting Episcopacy which their fathers bated, with their high-swalling eulogies of the heroic achievements and high-toned principles of their ancestors in resisting *black prelacy* to the very death. Their selfish fears seem to lead them to make common cause with the hierarchy, and their wish to prop up a declining cause and to



rally around it all who are justly proud of the noble achievements of our Scottish martyrs, appears to dictate the other. Their feverish anxiety to be regarded as the descendants of the sons of the Covenant, and their adherence to Presbytery as the only Scriptural form of church government, seem to forbid us to entertain the thought that they regard Episcopacy as equally divine. But, then, why do they now laud that very church which the Reformers laboured to destroy? Why do they not contend that they, at least, shall have as free access to their prince to teach him their Presbyterianism as the proudest mitred dignitary in the land—and that he shall have perfect liberty to avow his opinions should they succeed in convincing him of its truth? And why should this privilege be even confined to them? Why not confer the same benefit on the Independent, the Baptist, the Quaker, and every other individual? There is no reason why it should not be so which can be alleged either from Scripture or the light of nature; and both are obviously violated by the position in which the king is presently placed. Here, then, is a national sin, over which we may call on our Scottish Churchmen to weep with us, and to unite their energies with ours to have it wiped away from our national character.

When a nation has resolved on its form of government, it is bound, when favoured with the Word of God, to frame all its laws in accordance with his revealed will. The dispute between Churchmen and Dissenters is not about the propriety of recognizing God and submitting to be regulated by his authority on all matters on which it is competent for states to legislate. On this there is, so far as I know, the most perfect agreement. We differ merely about the points on which the state should legislate. We deny that any body of uninspired men, be it civil or ecclesiastical, has a right to frame one law to bind the conscience of a single individual as to what he shall either believe or practise in relation to the worship of God. The authority of the state is limited to the conduct of men in their civil relations. In matters relating to religion, all men are under law to their Creator, and are equally responsible to God, and to Him alone. When the state, then, adopts a certain creed, and declares it to be agreeable to the mind of God, and either imposes it on others under certain pains and penalties, or lays those who reject it, at its dictation under civil disabilities, or applies

the national treasure to propagate its own articles of faith, it oversteps its just authority, and violates alike the precepts and the precedents of Revelation. We are aware that Churchmen claim a right for the civil magistrate to establish the true religion on the authority of the Old Testament. Mr. Willis, in his late Lecture, says:—"We believe those precepts and examples (relating to magistrates in the Old Testament,) to be of a moral and permanent kind, as a rule for nations generally: that though the ceremonial law was of temporary and local obligation, the duty towards religion, with which civil rulers was charged in those ancient times, was founded on common principles involved in the law of nature; and accordingly performed with divine approbation, as the sacred records show, by *Gentile* as well as Jewish princes; and clearly foretold as to be performed by kings and other rulers *in Christian times*." Now, we request Mr. Willis to direct us to these clear predictions that foretell that kings should regulate the creed or tax their subjects for its support. Where is it foretold that they should act with authority in relation to religion at all? We affirm that there is no such prediction in the Old Testament. There are intimations of their submission to its claims, but none of dictation. It is rather too much to expect that we shall take his assertion as adequate proof. Besides, kings and rulers are not in the same circumstances now as they were under the Jewish Theocracy. Then their counsellors were inspired prophets, and they were themselves the divinely appointed vicegerents of Heaven, and acted expressly in obedience to the commands of the Universal Sovereign. Every offence committed by a Jew was treason against God, and as such punished by his express appointment. All the laws and their penalties were of divine appointment. There was no civil legislature permitted to enact a single statute. If, then, the example of Jewish magistrates be binding on us, we must follow their example fully—burn the British Statute-book—substitute the Old Testament in its place—and adhere to its laws to the very letter, except in so far as these have been expressly modified or repealed by the New. Now, we find no such express modification of them: and, as Mr. Willis demands an explicit repeal of these or our adoption of them, we have an unquestionable right to require him, on the ground of consistency, to embrace them and enforce them in all their extent. Is he prepared for this? No. He

will not allow the magistrate to compel any man to adhere to a system which he cannot conscientiously embrace. But it was one of the duties of the Jewish magistrate to enforce entire religious uniformity on every dweller in Judea. The Jew who separated himself from the national worship was to be "cut off from Israel." He contends that the magistrate is bound, by the precepts of the Old Testament, to enforce the religious observance of the Sabbath, but will he permit him to inflict the full penalty connected with that precept? Does he insist that the Sabbath-breaker shall be stoned to death? No. He is too merciful to push the law to this extent. Does he rise up in holy jealousy for the honour of God at the idolatrous systems that exist under the British sway, and demand that the sword be instantly unsheathed and never returned to its scabbard till every worshipper of graven images be destroyed? His virtuous indignation does not swell just so high. But this was the imperative duty of the Jewish magistrate. He was bound to put every idolator to death; and this was the light in which the early Reformers viewed the subject. They indeed hesitated to act on their principles, but they stoutly asserted them. And this is the only consistent view which can be taken of the matter. Many of our modern Churchmen evidently long for the period when they shall again be permitted to reign in undisturbed tranquillity, secured to them by a forced uniformity; but the persecution and death which this would occasion is never likely to disgrace afresh the annals of British history. The bloody scenes produced by such arrogant despotism shall never again, we trust, be enacted in our country. If, then, the precepts and examples of the Old Testament are binding, let them be enforced, but if they are to be modified to meet the shifting views and necessities of Churchmen, they are virtually repealed, and repealed too under the admission that they are still obligatory. We could not wish to see our opponents tossed on the horns of a more painful dilemma. It has been well said, "The law establishes a religion, and yet tolerates disobedience; and, while it tolerates, taxes toleration. An established religion is a misnomer, wherever men are allowed the right of private judgment. It is not an established *religion* we have, but established tithes and established endowments."\* And for this state of

\* Sir Arthur Brooke Faulkner, page 41.

things Churchmen plead. And the endowment part of the system is that which invests it with peculiar charms in their estimation, and to which they most tenaciously cling, and is that very part of it for which they have not one particle of countenance in the Word of God. All the examples and precepts, both of the Old and New Testaments, are against them in reference to it. The tithes of the Jewish dispensation were appropriated to the Levites by God himself, and the magistrate was neither commanded nor did he ever interfere with their payment. There are Scriptural examples of private donations freely given both by Jewish and heathen princes for the worship of God out of their own "proper good," and there are predictions that these shall be repeated under the gospel dispensation, but of taxes there is not a single instance. On this fact, then, we take our stand, and require all Churchmen, as they venerate the authority of Scripture, and desire to see their system modelled in accordance with its whole tenor, to unite with us in striving to expunge all those enactments on this point, which are so foul a blot on the British Statute-book, and so dishonouring to the author of Revelation.

But, in addition to this, we affirm that the civil power has practically proved itself wholly unfit to superintend the religious interests of the community. It has uniformly injured religion wherever it has intermeddled with it. Witness the lamentable experiments it has made in Britain on this all-important matter. In the wantonness of the most freakish caprice, it has made and unmade churches as it has cabinets. Henry Eighth revolted from the Pope, and wheeled round his clergy, at the word of command, to do homage to himself as the head of the church. Edward, his successor, carried the Reformation a little farther than his imperious father, while Mary again restored the allegiance of the clergy to the Romish See. Elizabeth, on her accession to the Crown, once more metamorphosed the English Church, and converted it, by an act of her council, to Protestantism. Cromwell collated to endowments Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, just as it accorded with his humour. Charles the Second restored the hierarchy to its original Episcopalian purity, and notwithstanding his double subscription of the Solemn League and Covenant, sent his armies to this country to suppress that very Presbyterianism he was sworn to defend. At the Revolution, Presbytery was once more legalized in Scotland.



At last, wearied out with unsuccessful experiments over the consciences of men, the state makes a compromise of its prerogative, and allows every man to choose his own religion, but still compels him to pay for the support of its own nurslings. Even this modified state of things can now scarcely be endured, and another change is obviously at hand. Let any man of common sense, or of religious principle, look at these facts and then say if the civil magistrate of the most enlightened community in the world has ever given the slightest evidence of his competency to superintend the spiritual interests of his subjects. Dr. Chalmers has lately discovered that while the people ask from him the bread of life, he gives them a stone. Let them learn, then, to look for this essential requisite to their eternal welfare to another quarter. Let them cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and put their trust in the promises of Christ, and use the simple means for its promotion which he has promised to bless.

So far, then, from our system destroying national responsibility, it sternly demands that every department of our national affairs be regulated by a strict regard to the revealed will of God. And we have ever declared it to be one of the most powerful motives by which we are impelled to persevere in our present efforts against all civil establishments of religion, because we firmly believe that their existence adds to our national guilt. This, in our estimation, is one of our foulest social crimes. It is not my duty to prove the utter contrariety of all such institutions to the Scriptures of truth. This has been admirably and irrefutably demonstrated by a preceding Lecturer. And if no man, whatever be the office which he holds, has a right to dictate authoritatively to the conscience of his fellow-man what he shall believe in reference to his eternal interests, neither can he have any right to force him to contribute to maintain doctrines in which he does not believe; and Christianity expressly forbids the use of carnal weapons in its defence. If there be one truth more plainly taught in Scripture than another, it is the responsibility of every individual to God for the reception which he gives to his message. What, then, must be the arrogance of the claim and the guilt involved in it which invests a set of articles drawn up by fallible men with all the authority of divine truth, and demands that the treasure of the nation be lavished in pro-



pagating them because they have received the sanction of the state. For, remember, it is not the Bible that is established, but human commentaries on it. It is not Christianity that is declared to be true, but the opinions of certain sects in reference to it. It is the thirty-nine articles of the Episcopacy in England, and the Westminster Confession of Faith of Presbyterians in Scotland, not to mention the Popery of Lower Canada, that are established. Now, I ask, can this be for the glory of God or the interests of the universal church? Can such proceedings tend to confirm men in their attachment to the religion of Jesus, or unite them in harmonious combination for the diffusion of the truth? The very reverse has always been the result. It has armed the infidel with the most powerful weapons, which he has not failed to wield with terrible effect against the citadel of our faith, and furnished him with arguments against its heavenly origin which never could have existed but for the interference of the secular power with the spiritual and independent kingdom of Jesus Christ.

So long as the state laboured to enforce uniformity of religious opinion, it either reduced religion to a cold unmeaning round of lifeless forms, and superinduced an utter stagnancy of thought, and spread the gloomy desolation of spiritual death through all its territories; or it had to arm itself with all the horrors of the inquisition, the dungeon, the rack, the scaffold and the stake, to crush the rising inquiries of enterprizing spirits. And, oh! at what an expense of blood and treasure was the deep degradation of the dark reign of papal domination established over the nations of Europe, and the efforts of the early Reformers suppressed in some of the countries of christendom. The same fearful experiment was repeated in England and Scotland during the reign of Charles the Second, and with the same disastrous consequences. Since the Revolution, religious liberty has been advancing with gigantic strides, and in its march it has been demolishing one frowning bulwark of religious despotism after another, till the whole fortress is now tottering on its basis. The cry of distress is now raised in earnest by its occupants. It is loud and piercing. But we must not spare for their crying. To their piteous wailings we can only return the friendly invitation to join our standard, for onward we must march. If they comply, we shall hail them as an auxiliary band of Christian warriors, resolved by the weapons of truth and argument to fight their way till we have

completely destroyed every citadel of anti-christ, and left him not an outpost from which he shall again annoy the simple-hearted followers of the Lamb.

We are fully convinced that next to the innate depravity of man the greatest obstacle to the universal diffusion of pure Christianity is its civil establishment in Europe. And were these anti-scriptural systems once out of the way, not only would we be delivered from a grievous national sin, but behold the friends of Jesus exerting all their energies in holy rivalry to diffuse "the savour of the Redeemer's name in every place."

But we are told that a state is "a moral person, who possesses an understanding and will peculiar to herself, and is susceptible of obligations and rights." This "moral person," we are told, "resides in those who are invested with the public authority, and represent the entire nation." These are the words of the celebrated Vattel, quoted with approbation by Mr. Brown. But if he understands their meaning, I do not. To me they appear utter nonsense. To talk of a moral person residing in other moral persons, and to make this person feminine, as if this nation were governed by women, equals in intelligibility any dogma in the transcendental philosophy. I can conceive of no responsibility apart from a moral agent; but can the state, with any propriety of speech, be characterized as a "moral person," or as having any agency at all apart from the individuals who compose it? Certainly not. Shall this moral person, which figures so prominently in Mr. Brown's pamphlet, preserve her identity in another world, and take her station before the judgment-seat of Christ? This will not be affirmed. Nations exist only in this world. Where, then, is her personality now? It must be the mere phantom of the imagination, or at best but a figure of speech to designate the united wills and schemes of the men who compose the state. But the responsibility connected with these schemes must rest with those who plan, execute, and approve of them, and not on some indefinable something to which their deliberations impart a separate being. And it is right that it should rest on individuals, and be pressed on their consciences. For it has been well observed, "Individuals do wrong; but bodies do mighty wrong; and do it without remorse: men singly have consciences; but a corporation has no conscience." It is, then, upon a sound principle, and a correct view of human nature,

that Voluntaries maintain that every individual is responsible to God for all his actions in every relation in life. The king must give an account of himself to the Universal Judge for all his official acts, as well as for his private doings; and this holds true in relation to every inferior magistrate. And, so far from wishing to see our monarch banish religion from his throne, and his cabinet, and his parliament, we desire to behold its ascendancy in all his official acts, and in all his private intercourse. We wish to see religion influencing and regulating his edicts, but we deprecate the guilt involved in his attempting authoritatively to legislate for Christianity. We would delight to witness all the dignitaries in the land doing every thing for the support and diffusion of the gospel, in every relation they sustain, by all the means which the Word of God warrants, and the Great Head of the Church has enjoined. But, then, the question again recurs, What are these means? Is their device left to the wisdom and ingenuity of erring men, or are they developed in the Scriptures of truth? We believe and assert that the means of supporting and diffusing the religion of Jesus Christ are contained in the Bible, and not in Acts of Parliament. And, if we must be branded, on this account, as holding principles of an atheistical tendency, we can pity the ignorance or the malignity which deals in such slanders. We maintain that there is not a single precept or example in the Bible for extorting money for the support of religion, and not an instance of a magistrate appropriating for this purpose a single fraction of any funds but those which belonged personally to himself. All was voluntary, and for this we earnestly contend. Let our rulers give as munificently as they please of their own proper good. It is their duty. They are bound, in this way, to stimulate the liberality of their subjects for the support of the gospel and the diffusion of its blessings over the world. And we should rejoice to see our monarch imitating the pious king of Israel, and from the loftiest battlement of his palace, exclaiming, "And who is willing this day to consecrate his services unto the Lord?" But we object to his tithe-proctors, and his captions and hornings, and all the other pains of civil law, as totally inadmissible in this sacred cause. Mr. Willis, indeed, affirms that Voluntaries "deny the duty of a legislature, as such, to appeal even to the *voluntary* liberality of the community, in favour of a true religion more than a false." Where he

found this denial I know not, but certain I am I never met with it but in his pages. The legislature is not in the habit of making voluntary appeals on any subject. But, if it should condescend so far as to stimulate by arguments and Scriptural motives the liberality of the community in favour of Christianity, no Voluntary would object; nay, we would hail it as a signal proof of the triumph of our principles.

Besides, if the state be bound to punish one sin as committed against God, then is it equally bound to punish every sin which it can possibly detect. All sin is offensive to God, injurious to the best interests of man, and if not repented of, exposes to the highest sanctions of his law. Unbelief is a sin of the greatest magnitude, and denounced with peculiar severity by the Almighty. Why, then, is this not included among the number of offences punishable by the state? It may be said the condition of the heart does not lie open to the inspection of man. True, but a public profession of a right state of heart towards God might be demanded, and if not complied with, punished. But this would be persecution. Yes, but so is every interference of the state in religious matters. It is surely not more unjust, and certainly indicates more concern for their spiritual interests to require men to think right on religion than to compel them to support a system of which they do not approve, or to support even the truth itself in a manner which they believe to be injurious to its interests, and contrary to the will of their Saviour. But no advocate of magisterial interference in religion contends, so far as I know, that every sin against God ought to be punished by the secular power. He arbitrarily selects a few glaring offences, and insists that the state take cognizance of these. This is manifestly absurd. Were these offences singled out as committed against the state, we might quarrel with the selection, but not with the principle. But this would be to abandon the doctrine for which Churchmen contend. The state is invested with power by God himself to deal with its subjects in their civil relations, but not officially to interfere with their religion. This it cannot do without daringly usurping his sacred prerogative—violating the rights of conscience and inflicting gross injustice. The duty of the magistrate to religion is obviously to recognize its truths himself—submit to be regulated by them in all his official and social relations—to encourage his subjects, by his strict regard to all its require-



ments, to profess and support it for themselves—set them an example in every good work—afford them the fullest protection while acting on their conscientious religious convictions, so long as these do not interfere with the peace of society—and to countenance those who, by their holy and blameless lives, adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, not by pensions and civil immunities, but by elevating them to those offices which they are best qualified to fill. This would do more, in a short time, to promote the cause of godliness, and advance the interests of Christianity, than all that civil establishments of religion are ever likely to effect, though all their present cumbersome machinery were to be kept in perpetual motion, or their clerical advocates loaded with additional millions of the national wealth.

It is perfectly obvious, too, that if it be the duty of a state to establish religion in its own dominions, it can only, with consistency, establish one form of it. It has been well remarked, that “The state, acknowledging but one true religion, can consistently set up but one creed. It sets up three—one in each of its dominions. Having set up three, it annuls its right of setting up but one, and confirms its right of setting up as many as there are opinions among its subjects.” From this conclusion it is impossible to escape. Besides, if it be incumbent on the state to provide, by force, for the support of the true religion in its own dominions, it must be equally its duty to propagate it throughout the world by the same means. Christianity is not designed, like Judaism, for one little territory, but for the whole earth. And the duties we owe to its great Author are not fully discharged till we have sent it to every spot on our globe where there is an immortal being to be saved by it. Why, then, do our Churchmen, formerly so zealous in preaching up a crusade against the liberties of Europe, which cost this nation hundreds of millions, not summon the armies of the state into the field, and send them forth with their muskets in their hands, and their Bibles in their knapsacks, to propagate and establish the blessed religion of the “Prince of Peace” over all the earth? Are they silent on this subject, because the presence of the soldiery at home is so necessary for the collection of their tithes? Mahomet’s practice was more consistent with his creed than theirs. He saw that if he had a right to set up his own dogmas by force, and to maintain them by the sword, he had an equal right to extend them to the ends of the earth. It seems to be very



obvious that the method of supporting the gospel in our own country must be improper and unscriptural, which cannot be applied to diffuse it throughout the world. And if it be lawful to imprison and kill in its defence at home—why not in its dissemination throughout the globe?

It is still, however, urged, that the duty of maintaining the ordinances of Christianity must be incumbent on the state, because it is said in Scripture, “The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish: yea those nations shall be utterly wasted.”—Isaiah lx. 12. These words plainly intimate, from the connection in which they stand, that national service is to be rendered to the church; but then the question occurs, Is it by the nation through its rulers, or by the individuals who compose it? We have no hesitation in affirming that it is by the latter. The Saviour commanded his disciples to teach all nations, and it will be admitted that they both understood and obeyed his command. And we know that their instructions were chiefly imparted to the people. Besides, were we to argue from a general term, we could prove that all nations shall be sisted as such at the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is said, “Before Him shall be gathered all nations.” It is admitted that this term denotes the individuals of which communities are made up in these instances. And why not in the present? Religious duty is just as personal as the account we must render. And as the mode in which this service is to be performed is not specified, it must be in harmony with the nature of religion and the precepts of the New Testament. It is too much for Churchmen to quote these words to prove that it is by rulers taxing their subjects for its support, when no such right is conferred in the Bible. For this the verse gives no authority, and the whole chapter from which it is taken describes the church as shining in the glory of Jehovah, and attracting by its splendour the willing tribute of all grades of society. Instead of being brought into this prosperous state by the patronage of the state, she is exhibited as having attained it by the favour of her divine Head. Instead of exulting in the protection and pay of princes, she is described as walking in the light of the Lord, and relying with implicit confidence on His faithfulness. And one of the promises which ensures her defence is quite incompatible with the theory of Churchmen, “I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise." I know not a more dangerous method of interpreting Scripture than by picking out an isolated text and constructing an argument on the mere sound of the words rather than on the scope of the passage of which it forms a part. And yet it is only by having recourse to this rash and improper plan of exposition that any thing like a shadow of Scriptural evidence has ever been adduced in favour of magisterial interference with the religion of others.

We affirm, then, that it is not the duty of the state to tax its subjects in support of Christianity, or to establish their creed, and consequently fearful guilt is incurred when these things are done. And, if there be one national act which has been followed more than another with the signal displeasure of the Almighty, it has been the interference of the secular power with the church of Christ. Heathen superstition coalesced with the civil power, and seemed to strengthen the government that presided over it. But, from the days of Constantine to the present time, the alliance of the church with the state has been a very Pandora's box, out of which the most dreadful mischiefs have sprung, and deluged the nations with blood, and brought foul calumny on the peaceful religion of Jesus. The dreadful consequences which have resulted from the interference of the secular power with the church are so broadly stamped on the page of history, and have been so visibly followed by the judgments of Heaven, that we must be entirely blind not to mark the connection. Your time will not admit of a particular illustration of this important point. We can only call upon you to consult the testimony of impartial historians on the subject, and they will tell you what have been the consequences to the state itself. There you will read of the anarchy it has occasioned—the thrones it has tumbled—the dynasties it has overthrown—the civil wars it has kindled—the gibbets it has erected—the fires of martyrdom it has lighted up—the oceans of human blood it has shed—the cabinets it has shivered—and the commotion it is now exciting through every grade of British society. Behold it in France, at the period of the Revolution, when the people, crushed to the very dust by a tyrannical government, swayed by a political church, rose, in the wildness of despair, and

retaliated so terribly on their cruel oppressors. Then the demon of discord broke loose, snapped every sacred and civil tie, smashed into shivers the social edifice, and, riding on the whirlwind of revolutionary phrenzy, spread desolation and carnage throughout the land. Nor was it satiated till millions were sacrificed to glut its fury, and the fiendish spirit which it generated sought to stifle its compunctions by writing on every churchyard—Death an eternal sleep, and proclaiming—There is no God. These were not the doings of Voluntaries, but of a church and state alliance.

The effects of this connection have been equally disastrous to the church. Before the Reformation, these were conspicuous in an ignorant, tyrannical, ambitious, and time-serving priesthood—in a prostrate and degraded people—in the triumph of superstition—the death of vital godliness—the substitution in its place of splendid rites and unmeaning mummeries, and the universal prevalence of every species of immorality and crime. Witness the results of this alliance still where it exists in all its entireness, and produces its genuine fruits. These are ignorance, bigotry, superstition, tyranny, and crime. Behold it in Ireland, in the arrogance of its bishops—the political ravings and non-residence of the clergy—in Tory parsons—empty churches—starving flocks—and tithe massacres. Contemplate it in our beloved Scotland, in the imposition of patronage—a law-bound church—a moderate clergy—a furious partizanship in the supreme ecclesiastical court—in roupings and imprisonments for ministers' stipends—a disgraceful distrust of the energies of the gospel—a craving appetite for domination in the state-dependant clergy—and a strong desire to rob the public for their own emolument and aggrandizement. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" The system has not only been ill wrought but it works *ill*. And we never can hope to be rescued from its evils till we are delivered from the system itself. Under this honest conviction, we call on all who deprecate the wrath of God—their share in the national guilt which the system entails, and the bitter consequences which spring from it, to assail it with the "sword of the Spirit," and to seek its utter and permanent extinction.

Having thus shown that the civil community is not responsible for the support and diffusion of Christianity, it may not be improper to show, in a few sentences, where this

accountability lies. The religion of Jesus is designed to be universally disseminated. It is suited to every clime and designed to irradiate all nations. It is equally clear that it is to be propagated by human instrumentality. By whom, then, is this to be effected? We answer, by those who have cordially embraced it: or, in other words, by the churches. This appears to us so reasonable and obvious, that we cannot but wonder that it has ever been questioned. Who so likely to feel their responsibility to extend the religion of the Saviour as those who have themselves felt the joys of his salvation. There is no security that the state shall, at any one time, be composed of men of this description; but that cannot be a Christian church which is composed of any other. There may be pious men in connection with the state, and we should rejoice to see them all possessed of this character—and there may be hypocrites in the church, and we wish there were fewer of them, but the distinctive feature of the members of Christ is that they are saints, and there is provision made by Him that they be so; but there is no security whatever that our civil rulers shall possess this character. Hence, we find it is on the church that Christ has imposed the duty of supporting his ordinances and propagating his gospel. That the light of divine truth should be diffused by the instrumentality of the church, is frequently intimated in ancient prophecy. One instance may be selected. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” This prediction has an undoubted reference to the “beginning of the gospel,” which is often designated in the Old Testament the “last days,” and beautifully accords with the commission which Christ gave to his apostles, and the manner in which they acted on it. “Go ye and teach all nations—go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” All his commands to propagate his religion were addressed to his followers as members of his church. And it has been well remarked, that “men who respect themselves, and who have



learned to exercise a vigorous common sense, in common affairs, will hold it certain, in all cases, that those who are instructed how to perform particular duties, are actually the parties looked to for the discharge of such duties. Exhortations and commands are not cross-directed by plain and upright men."\* And, if this hold true in the intercourse of ordinary life, how much more so in the case of the Saviour issuing his commands for the diffusion of his religion? And in this light did the apostles and churches understand them. They did not sit down in solemn deliberation, mourning over the fearful condition of a godless world, to devise how they might most successfully obtain endowments from the state before they commenced their all-important mission—they did not set about manufacturing petitions to the government praying for money to defray the expenses of their laborious and toilsome journeys. There is not one appeal to the civil rulers on this point, nor one intimation that this was any part of their duty at all. The apostles understood the charge as given to them. And they instantly acted upon it. And their preaching soon raised up a host of men who were not only willing to contribute of their substance for the cause of Jesus, but even to lay down their lives for its defence. And this duty still rests on us as Christians, and not as members of civil society. And if we would imitate their example, similar results will still follow. The church is the candlestick which is to hold up the lamp of divine truth by which this dark earth is to be illumined. Christians are the light of the world. The church, in primitive times, guarded, enriched, and upheld by her divine Founder, and fed with the free-will offerings of her members, caused the word of the Lord to sound abroad in all the regions round about, and she ought to do so still. The promise is as full now as it was then. Her Lord is with her still. Her resources are more abundant. Her facilities for accomplishing the work are increased by the invention of printing, the freer intercourse of all nations, the multiplication of churches, and the spirit of inquiry that is now abroad. Why, then, does she not feel her duty, and vigorously respond to the call? Alas! a large portion of the church has thrown off the duty from herself and devolved it on the state, and the other part of it is compelled to struggle against an anti-Christian

\* Spiritual Despotism, page 161.



influence, which operates most fatally in retarding the progress of truth, and by which its energies have been crushed and its standard of duty lowered. To both we would say, in the spirit-stirring language of the holy seer, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised, and the unclean; shake thyself from the dust: arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isaiah lii. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10. O when will this glorious prediction have its full accomplishment! When will the churches unite in a holy confederacy on the footing of the primitive Christians, and go forth to evangelize the world? When will Christians learn that One is their Master, even Christ, and that they are all Brethren? When will they condescend to meet on equal terms, and contend in the spirit of love for the faith once delivered to the saints, and exert all their energies, after the example of the churches in Judea that were in Christ, to send the gospel into every dark corner in the land, and to diffuse its saving light throughout the world?

We can scarcely have patience with those who affirm that the church is inadequate to such a mighty achievement. In the strength, and by the grace of the Saviour, she is perfectly competent for greater things than these. Were there another planet accessible to her visits, inhabited by sinners, were it the will of her Master, she might Christianize it too. And we never hope to see the world converted to the Redeemer till she take the work exclusively into her own hands. To this she is called. Let her recognize her duty, and feel her responsibility to Christ and to perishing millions. O how deep must be her guilt in declining the honour her

Lord has prepared for her in being a fellow-worker with him, and how awful her infatuation to attempt to throw the responsibility from herself and to roll it on the secular power. But on the church it must rest. Here the Saviour has placed it, and nothing but a voice from Heaven can ever release her from this accountability. It rests on every individual member of this sacred community. Let us weigh this matter well, and contemplate it in the light of Scripture now: for we shall yet have to feel it in the presence of our judge, amid the thunderings of the day of doom and the tremendous illumination of a blazing and dissolving universe.

We shall now very briefly—

II. Consider the Voluntary principle in relation to the religious instruction of the poor. Could it be satisfactorily shown that this principle is either inadequate to furnish those who, through poverty, are unable to provide the means of salvation for themselves, or entirely overlooks their spiritual necessities, it must be abandoned. For to the poor the gospel must be preached. We frankly admit that those who have in our country acted on the Voluntary principle, have not hitherto done all that they might or ought to have accomplished for the eternal welfare of the ignorant and the destitute. But let not our opponents seize on this concession. It can avail them nothing for the defence of their cause. For there cannot be an impartial observer in the country but must have perceived that almost the only religious instruction which the poorer classes in the community receive is through the operation of the Voluntary principle. The parish churches are pre-eminently the meeting-houses of the opulent, and a pauper bench or two is generally all that is provided for the poor. The Dissenters, on the contrary, seldom, and ought never, to make this odious distinction. They either give them free sittings, in an unoccupied part of the church, of their own choice, or aid them with money to take seats for themselves. But it may be said that this arrangement respects only the pious poor who have a taste for the gospel, and therefore solicit admission into our fellowship. This, we confess, has, till very lately, been too much the case. And various causes have contributed to this. And one, which we once powerfully felt, and which is yet in extensive operation, has been created by that very establishment whose adherents now

so very modestly fling this objection against our system. The legal incumbent claims the whole parish as his own, and professes to exercise a pastoral superintendence over it all. The Dissenting minister is often enough reminded that he is merely *tolerated*. In these circumstances, it is not wonderful that he should have limited his attentions to those who place themselves under his care, or request his services and visits. He feels the delicacy of his position, and wishes not to obtrude himself where he may not be welcome. This, we allow, was valuing his Master's commission too little, and the commission of the government too much. But still this feeling will operate on the firmest minds, unless corrected by steady principle and a deep conviction of responsibility to his Master and the souls of perishing men, or be counteracted by public opinion. This duty has hitherto been too much forgotten and neglected for the sake of good neighbourhood with the parish official. But were the Voluntary principle allowed free scope, and all odious distinctions swept away, it is perfectly adequate to pervade every city, and town, and hamlet in the land, in all their gradations of rank with the blessings of the gospel, and to bring them under its influence, so far as this can be accomplished by mere instrumentality. Before the expensive and cumbersome apparatus of an Establishment had been set up—to the poor the gospel was preached. And under which principle was it that the poor and profligate in England and Wales were visited with the glad tidings of salvation, and tens of thousands of them rescued from the gulph of perdition, and led to spend holy and useful lives? The Established Church was slumbering in profound apathy, perfectly unmoved by the perishing millions by which she was surrounded, and when she did arouse from her slumbers, it was to cast out of her pale the apostolic Whitefield and the devoted Wesley, as deluded fanatics, because they loved the souls of men more than the canons of the Episcopacy. And on which principle is it that the poor moral outcasts of our own city are visited and have the gospel preached to them? It is upon the Voluntary. The City Mission and the Christian Instruction Societies are plying their assiduous and unobtrusive labours among the families of the poor, and at less than one-tenth of the expense at which one of our city ministers is supported, each missionary doing as much good in this important sphere of Christian philanthropy as

the best beneficed clergyman in the land could accomplish in the same situation. And had the churches commenced this work of evangelization before ignorance and immorality had been permitted to reach their present alarming height, the field would have been much more easily brought under religious cultivation. As it is, we do not despair. Christians are but beginning to ascertain the extent of their own resources and the amount of their capabilities. They are perfectly adequate, in their Master's strength, to the performance of all the work to which He has called them. Let them put forth their energies in combination with their prayers, and the "wilderness shall soon be glad for them, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Every Christian church can command a vast amount of effective talent and piety, which may be employed with the greatest advantage for the religious interests of the poor, and at very little expense. And the services which pious individuals can render are the best adapted to the necessities of the ignorant and careless. The frequent and affectionate visits of a pious neighbour are more likely to win their hearts and impress their consciences than the occasional and more formal attentions of a stated official. All this, and much more, is within the reach of the Voluntary principle. The building of churches, and the endowment of ministers, will do but little for the poor. The well paid stipendiary will be found much more frequently in the comfortable mansions of the rich than by the fire-sides and death-beds of the indigent. It looks exceedingly well on paper, and seems to be instinct with the purest philanthropy, to talk in swelling sentences of the good effected by the kindly intercourse of the well paid parish minister with the poorest of his flock; but how often is this actually realized in real life, or is it likely to be ever more generally witnessed under the operation of the compulsory system. A splendid exception may occasionally occur, like a bright meteor in a murky sky, but this serves only as a temporary flash to show the deepness of the surrounding gloom. If you wish to find men who will labour faithfully in their Master's work, they must be attracted to it from the love they feel to it, and be content to live of the fruits of the gospel. But the religious interests of the poor ought not to be confided to any one individual, but to be the care of the whole church. Every individual member of it should regard



himself as responsible for all the good he can do, and especially for reclaiming the wandering and the profligate to the fold of Christ. Till some method, similar to this, be adopted, we shall still have to mourn over the "waste places" of our land. There is not only an elasticity in the Voluntary principle, which may be readily applied to every emergency of moral necessity, but likewise a fertility of resource which can scarcely ever be exhausted. The more efficiently you work this principle of Christian benevolence, the more abundant will be the supplies you will obtain for doing good, and every new convert which you make under its operation will be an accession to your strength, from the widow with her "two mites" cast into the Lord's treasury, under his benignant smile, to the rich men who cast in much.

It is curious to witness the confidence which some Churchmen repose in voluntary contribution for the supply of the temporal wants of the poor, and to contrast it with their want of faith in its efficiency for their eternal interests. They can deplore the evils of a "compulsory pauperism," while they are perfectly fascinated with the spectacle of a compulsory Christianity. The former is an evil of so enormous a magnitude, that we may regard ourselves as cheaply delivered from it by an equal amount of clerical endowments. To show you that there is no exaggeration in this statement, let the Circular of the Assembly's Committee speak:—"And certain it is, that the evils of a compulsory pauperism is far more conquerable in small than in large parishes." This is not so certain as its authors think. This most depends on the character of the population of the parish. They go on to say—"By every new erection, the means will be more within our reach for narrowing the field of superintendence, and adding not only to the amount of our Voluntary collections, but what is of still more salutary consequence, to a more thorough and effectual management of the parochial charity of Scotland. In as far as a compulsory provision for the poor should thereby become unnecessary, or, at all events be much alleviated in our towns and populous parishes, the endowment applied for, instead of a simple gratuity, might be regarded as the purchase by Government, at a small expense, of a great public and patriotic interest." Now it appears from this representation, that the Assembly's Committee believe



that the Voluntary principle would work well for the supply of the temporal wants of the poor, though it is rather a precarious and undignified source of supply for clergymen. And farther, that it is very patriotic to relieve our wealthy proprietors and householders of a compulsory tax, by the half-pence of the poor, and to endow ministers out of the national Exchequer, to which every pauper in the land contributes his share. Truly some men have a strange idea of patriotism. But what I wish to press on your attention is, that if the Assembly's Committee can rely on the strength of Christian principle, and the power of general benevolence, provided they are well paid for exciting these, to furnish enough to supply all the temporal necessities of the poor, why can they not also rely on the same means for their religious instruction? The sum which is requisite to furnish them with the necessities of the body for a week, would provide most efficiently for their religious instruction for a year. And if they can cast the poor on the Christian sympathies of their brethren, why cannot they trust themselves to the Christian principles of their hearers? Or if the free-will offerings of the community are esteemed inadequate to meet the demands that would be made upon them, for both the temporal, and spiritual interests of the poor, why not allow the law to stand as it is, in relation to the former, and bring Christian benevolence to bear on the latter? Is the Churchman's estimate of Christian principle so high, that he believes it will feed, and clothe, and shelter the poor, but allow them to perish for lack of knowledge? This, of all possible assumptions, is the most absurd.

The melancholy confessions of impotency on the part of the endowed church, to meet the spiritual wants of the population, furnish most satisfactory proofs of her unscriptural character. After existing for so many years in every part of our country, and numbering the nobles, and titled of the land among her eldership, she has, according to her own admission, made so little impression on the minds of her people, that they would allow their own pastors to starve, were the government to withdraw its support, and permit the country, in so far as she is concerned, to return to a state of heathenism. If this be true, which we do not believe, then it is clear that the Christianity which the Established Church teaches, differs essentially from the Christianity of the New Testament. The gospel of the grace of God, when

it is believed in sincerity, leads men to give not only of their substance, but also themselves to the Lord. A Christian church which boasts of its numbers, and its wealth, and yet declares that it cannot support itself, and propagate the gospel by voluntary offerings, publishes its own disgrace, and proves, though it may have a name to live, that it is in reality dead.

Let the churches be filled with efficient and faithful ministers, who shall teach the doctrines of the gospel, and urge on Christians their duty to support their own institutions, and to attend to the spiritual wants of the poor, and there will be no complaints of inability. The churches will prosper, and the poor will be cared for in a way most agreeable to themselves, and most honourable to the religion of Jesus Christ. That religion which breathes the love of Heaven on earth—displays the Saviour as an incarnation of love—and is designed to bind the scattered families of men by a bond of love, in one happy brotherhood, must be, if properly taught and exemplified, perfectly sufficient to gather to itself all the outcasts, and to nourish, and build up those who through grace believe in their “most holy faith.”

Christians, next to your own salvation, set your hearts on the advancement of the Saviour’s cause, and the spiritual welfare of your fellow men. Is there any sacrifice too great for that man or woman to make, who “knows the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” It is this sense of obligation to Christ, which will rouse you to the greatest efforts in his service—kindle the holiest love in your hearts—excite the purest zeal in his cause—prompt you to contend for the honour of his religion—and lead you to count not your lives dear to yourselves, that you may finish your course with joy.

The present controversy, though productive of some evils, has also effected much good, and is designed, we trust, to lead to more. It has roused many from their apathy, and called them, not only to the arena of polemics, but to the field of Christian exertion. More has been done these two years past by the endowed church for extending Christianity on the principles of Voluntary liberality, than for the last century. In this we rejoice. Ours is a contest for truth, and we hail its approaching triumph. We pant for the conversion of our opponents to our views, and delight to witness

their practical adoption, not for our own sakes merely, but likewise for theirs, and the honour of our holy religion. We long to meet them on the ground of our common faith, and to clasp them to our hearts as brethren, that we may rally with them around the standard of the cross, and march onwards in united array to demolish every stronghold of Satan, "by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."







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